

WHY THEY STAY: A LOOK INTO WHY THREE TITLE I EDUCATORS TAUGHT  
LONGER THAN THE FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE

by  
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## Dedication

For all the women in my life, past and present.

To my daughter, Novaley. I thank God every day for you.

## Acknowledgement

First I would like to thank God for giving me the knowledge, strength, and perseverance to complete this challenge. He continues to bless me every day and I am eternally grateful.

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study explored teacher retention rates within different Title I schools and why certain teachers stayed in the profession longer than the current five-year career average. Several studies have been completed on why teachers leave the field of education, and Ingersoll and Smith (2003) attribute some of the difficulties to low salary, student discipline problems, lack of administrative support, and low student motivation. While many prior studies have focused on the reasoning and factors as to why teachers are leaving, conversely, this study used a qualitative approach to determine and understand teachers' perspectives on factors that influence their retention within the education field for more than five years, specifically within a Title I school in a southwest city in Texas. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of why teachers at Title I schools stay for more than five years. This study sought to answer the following research question: What is the teachers' perception as to what factors, both internal and external; motivate educators to continue teaching longer than the typical five-year span within a Title I school? **Method:** The case study approach was employed to examine the perceptions of the three teachers. The study took place within one large Texas public school district, which contained many Title I schools. Critical case sampling was employed and the participants were chosen based on particular criteria from a social network of peers. After the chosen participants agreed to the study, the initial interviews took place. The live audio-based Zoom interviews were recorded in their entirety, and the responses were immediately transcribed. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. A maximum of two follow-up interviews and to allow for member-checking was also conducted, as needed. The in-depth interviews allowed the participants to be questioned using broad, open-ended questions. Upon interview

completion, the data collected were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to determine if there were common factors, motivators, attributes, or common themes that directly influenced why educators continue employment within a Title I school for more than five years. The information was taken and presented as the key findings for this study. **Results:** The results showed that the teachers were motivated by three major elements. These factors included: being motivated by their students and knowing that they have a great impact on their lives and are making a difference, an internal drive to continue within the profession, and being led by administration who maintained open communication and a positive work environment. The participants all agreed that ultimately, the motivation to remain in teaching was due to these major themes, and if one or more of these factors was negatively impacted or shown, it can seriously influence a teacher's decision to exit the profession no matter what year they are within their career. Additional findings revealed the teachers perceptions that there is a need for several improvements to be made within the profession regarding strategies that can be put into place to retain a higher population of effective teachers. **Conclusion:** This study uncovered themes that have been attributed to educators who have found success longer than the average five-year term. Through looking at and considering the perspectives of teachers who have already found continued success within Title I school teaching, this study serves as a basis for insight on the retention topic. The information provided may offer insight to educational leaders and teachers themselves on potential strategies, motivations, and attributes that foster higher retention rates. However, more research should be conducted on the positive aspect of the teacher retention issue in the future, and on a much larger scale in order for more teacher voices to be heard and taken into account.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

At an increasing rate, teacher turnover is becoming a major problem for schools around the country. In fact, “across the United States, approximately half a million teachers leave their schools each year” (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 304). Gone are the days where one would graduate from college as an educator and continue on the path until their career retirement. There has been some focus on minority teachers leaving the field, but this is a problem for non-minority teachers, as well. Very few people can still walk into their childhood school and see some—if any—of the same faces that they saw growing up. This is not only a problem within urban schools, or Title I schools, but also in rural and suburban schools across the country. More specifically, most new teachers struggle to make it to five years within the education field (Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). Several studies have been completed on why teachers leave education, and Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found some of the major difficulties have included: low salary, student discipline problems, lack of administrative support, and low student motivation. Additionally, numerous studies have shown that “turnover is higher among young and old teachers compared to middle-aged ones (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 305). Other studies which have been conducted also point to teachers of color—African American, Latino, leaving the field even quicker than their White counterparts (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010). Not only is this a problem for administrators, but also for the students who so desperately need consistency in their scholastic lives. The ‘revolving-door effect’ has become problematic in schools around the country (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 11). The high turnover is both expensive and time consuming in needing to find

replacements for these teachers; moreover, it does not solve the overall teacher retention issue. Hiring new, inexperienced teachers is only a temporary solution--a Band-Aid, rather--to a major concern that needs to be addressed immediately. The research previously completed on retention rates typically identifies the basis as to why teachers leave. Few studies have been published on why teachers in high-needs areas, such as at Title I schools, chose to stay in the profession for longer than the five-year average. This study gives additional perspectives and information from educators whom have lasted longer than the five-year average within a Title I school.

### **Personal Narrative**

I was born into what some say is a “diverse” family. At least it was 28 years ago in the Midwest. My mom is from Minnesota; my father is 100% Peruvian. I grew up in Minnesota most of my life, and during my elementary, middle, and high school years it was difficult to find other students who “looked like me” or those that I could relate to, because the majority of my town was Caucasian. My dad would come in for a school program and my classmates would say, “I didn’t know you were Mexican!” This was about the extent of their knowledge of someone who was a race other than White. My peers had academically successful parents with flourishing entrepreneurial businesses, while I ultimately became a first-generation college student. At a young age, I understood the importance of an education. I had teachers along the way who encouraged me, some who inspired me and others who probably don’t even remember my name.

I come from a horse-racing family, however my parents kept me away from that—left it to my brothers to take over the family business, so instead I spent my teenage

years volunteering: as a Sunday school teacher, local YMCA aide, and even volunteered at a local Catholic school during my undergraduate years, but never did I think I would ever become a teacher. I'm not the outgoing, exuberant, joyous 'teacher-type'. I was smart, but never thought I would be someone who is good at sharing or transferring that knowledge to other people—let alone children, even though I had worked with them for so long and within so many different environments.

I finished my undergraduate degree and moved to Houston, Texas. Unable to find a job I was in love within either the international relations or political science realm, I went back to school. I loved learning and newly pregnant, I decided that it would be nice to be on the same schedule as my partner (also a teacher), so I deemed education would be a good fit. I finished both the masters and certification program at an accelerated rate and I was off to the races!

In all honesty, teaching is not something that college truly prepares you for. The act of teaching, sure, but actually knowing how to manage a classroom full of almost 30 elementary kids with so many varied needs—no. Many say that the only way to 'figure it out' is to be thrown in. So many veteran teachers learned "that way" in the past. However, teaching is so different than it was twenty, ten, or even five years ago. It is constantly changing in the requirements and the amount of hats a teacher has to wear, yet I will not say that it has been for the better. In fact, ask pretty much any educator and they more than likely have the same sentiment about the field. Moving on, to be a 'white girl' teaching in one of Houston's most difficult areas—Acres Homes— as a first year teacher, is an experience in itself. Nothing could prepare me for my first years of

teaching in such a diverse area, even though I did attend a noteworthy public university close to the area.

The most exhausting, yet rewarding job on the planet, is teaching. However, through my short time as a teacher at a Title I school, I saw constant turnover of staff. At the end of my first year teaching, almost half of the staff at my school left. We contracted a new principal and well-over half of the staff ended up leaving during some point within the school year or at the end of it. This included me. Although I left to another Title I campus that was down the road, I was able to see a pattern in how much administration certainly impacts staff turnover.

Many of my old colleagues found work outside the district. Teaching was “too much” for them, so they left for an office job or to be home with their kids. They would joke and tell me that they “just wanted to be able to go to the bathroom when they wanted to,” or “actually have the weekend to spend with their family instead of lesson planning or worrying about the week ahead.” Simple things they wanted to be able to enjoy or have the freedom to do without being under constant stress from their workplace. Nevertheless, it got me thinking: despite all the hardships that I faced throughout the year with my students, I chose to stay within education (and even at another Title I school)—why didn’t they?

The question remained in my mind even after I began another career, still within education, but more flexible: why do some teachers stay for more than five years when the national average states that most educators are leaving within the first five? I had some observational experience and personal opinions on why my colleagues chose to leave, but I wondered about other factors. Were the reasons mostly internal or external?



Were these people completely persuaded by the experience they had with administration to leave? Still, there are many variables to this inquiry, but through my dissertation study, I was able to identify why three certain teachers stayed for more than five-years in what is perceived as an extremely difficult area: Title I education. In doing so, I have discovered ways in which we can possibly retain and motivate teachers for longer than the typical five-year stay. Likewise, there are a few inspiring stories from educators whom have been teaching within a Title I school for longer than the five-year average that are shared.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the need for more teachers, the United States continues to see a decrease in the retention of teachers past the five-year term. According to Zhang and Zeller (2016), “few issues in education threaten the nation as seriously as the present and growing shortage of teachers” (p. 73). In addressing the problem of losing quality teachers, it is important to view the factors which contribute to the high turnover rates year after year. This loss of teachers is not a problem that is only happening in urban or high-needs Title I schools, but schools of all types. Ingersoll, May, and Collins (2019) note that it is an even bigger problem for minority teachers by over 20% throughout the past decade.

However, very little is currently known about the reasons why teachers are staying longer than the five-year average at any school--let alone Title I schools. Title I schools serve students of low-economic status who often come with a host of other specialized needs and requirements, yet we continue to fill them with first-year teachers because we cannot retain quality veteran teachers within its walls. To note, minority

teachers are employed at much higher rates than non-minority teachers within these urban, high-poverty schools (Ingersoll et al., 2019). This is an encouraging statistic considering the demographic of students is ever-changing, especially throughout the past ten years. However, if we are to figure out how to keep teachers—minority or not—and reverse the trending increase of teachers leaving the profession, we must look at the opposite side of why teachers are staying and how we can promote this with our new hires in order to be proactive rather than retroactive.

### **Need for the Study**

As researchers Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, and Marinell (2017) state: “Since Richard Ingersoll first wrote about the “revolving-door” in the teaching profession, researchers and policymakers have recognized that high levels of teacher turnover pose a critical challenge to the goal of staffing U.S. public school classrooms with effective teachers” (p. 434). Although there is considerable research that has been conducted on teacher retention or attrition, there have been limited studies which focused on the positive side of the issue. Asking teachers why they have remained in the field for longer than the national average was difficult to find. This research is certainly important to retention, but there was a need for more research to be conducted on why there are teachers who remain in the profession despite the negativity from the public or media outlets. Even though teachers are literally the heart of the school and the reason why so many students’ lives are impacted and changed in a positive way, we tend to push educators aside as if they are second-class citizens and not major players in the education realm. It was time to instead focus on how we can retain them longer than the five-year

average and potentially set the stage for future individuals who may be interested in a long-term career in teaching.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that have influenced teachers at Title I schools within Texas, to remain in teaching for more than five years, despite the circumstances of our current education system.

This study gives the reader a look into how teachers have successfully remained in the profession for longer than the average tenure of most new teachers. Rather than having a negative-tone research paper that simply looks at factors as to why they are leaving; instead this study sought to discover potential qualities or strategies that could better assist future teachers, administrators, educational policy makers to choose and retain quality professionals within education.

### **Research Question**

A qualitative research design was used in order to determine and understand teachers' perspectives on what factors influenced them to remain teaching for more than five years within the field, specifically within a Title I school in Texas. More explicitly, a case-study approach was employed due to the bounded location, participants, and length of time during which the study took place.

The qualitative study was completed to answer the following research question:

What is the teachers' perception as to what factors, both internal and external; motivate educators to continue teaching longer than the typical five-year span within a Title I school?

## Definition of Terms

The terms used frequently throughout the study are shown below with their corresponding definition:

- ***Attrition:*** “the gradual reduction of the workforce by employees leaving;” therefore in the teaching context it would refer to the gradual reduction of teachers who choose to leave the field (“Attrition,” 2019)
- ***Beginning teachers:*** educators who are in their first three years of teaching
- ***Mentoring:*** another individual, typically a veteran teacher who guides, supports, and advises a novice teacher
- ***Recruitment:*** finding and hiring new teachers--typically at a lower cost
- ***Retention:*** the ability of a school or district to keep their teachers
- ***Teacher crisis:*** increasingly high numbers of teachers leaving the profession within their first five years of teaching
- ***Title I school:*** Federally-funded program which “provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards” (U.S. Department of Education)
- ***Turnover:*** the rate at which teachers are leaving their schools and are replaced by new teachers

## Summary

Chapter One detailed important information about the background of the researcher; a brief introduction about the study; the problem statement; the need and purpose of the study; the research question to be analyzed; and gave a basic definition of

terms list. These are the beginning, yet some of the most important features within the study. Chapter Two goes on to review countless articles surrounding the teacher retention problem and shows apparent themes which have emerged from the continuing research.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Overview of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that have influenced teachers at Title I schools within Texas to remain in teaching for more than five years, despite the circumstances of our current education system. This study involved three purposefully selected participants who provided the researcher with interview information. The analysis was qualitative and focused around the research question: What is the teachers' perception as to what factors, both internal and external; motivate educators to continue teaching longer than the typical five-year span within a Title I school?

#### **Theoretical Framework of Study**

The literature review in connection with this study was organized by different sections, which have impacted overall teacher retention. The review focuses both on urban, Title I schools and regular public schools. This method provided the basic framework for showcasing the different themes gained through current literature published about teacher retention rates. The information demonstrates many factors influence whether or not teachers remain in the profession. The review of literature overpoweringly notates the following: administrative support, Undergraduate program preparedness, mentoring, work environment, the cost of teacher turnover, and salary. It is important to note that these were not the only factors which impacted attrition, but were the most identified and published factors which impacted teacher retention over the years.

## **Introduction**

Teacher retention rates are influenced by a number of factors and reoccurring themes shown across many studies. In looking at literature and statistics from the past twenty years, it is apparent that teacher retention continues to be a vital topic within the realm of education. Darling-Hammond (2003) cites that “since the early 1990s, the annual number of exits from teaching has surpassed the number of entrants by an increasing amount, putting pressure on the nation’s hiring system” (p.6). To say there is only one factor that influences whether or not teachers stay in the field would be a fallacy. Ingersoll et al. (2019) list leadership support, school conditions, salary, age, and school demographics, are all factors that can play a role in minority and nonminority turnover. This report suggests that often a combination of factors lead to the departure of a teacher from the profession. These factors are all similarly essential to consider in addressing the retention issue. More importantly, it can lead to a more precise explanation as to why districts are struggling to maintain loyalty and offer ideas for turning this problem around. Specifically, influences such as administrative support, undergraduate preparation preparedness, mentoring, and the overall work environment can lead to overall job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. When these features are taken into consideration, we can begin to move towards solving the retention issue across the country.

## **Administrative Support**

A key factor found in many studies suggests that administrative and peer support is critical to teacher retention. Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015) cite that the principal and how they treat the staff and behave around them have a profound impact on

a teacher's intent to stay or leave the school. These investigators go on to mention that this factor has the most significant impact on teacher retention. Investigators Kaufman and Al-Bataineh (2011) corroborate the idea that both support and encouragement from school administration are critical factors in a teacher's decision to remain at their school. Most especially in the case of minority teachers who left the field, Ingersoll et al. (2019) found that 81% of its minority participants reported that they ultimately left due to being dissatisfied with administration. Investigators Swars, Meyers, Mays, Lack (2009) found that 51% of their participants agreed that administration was "both supportive and encouraging" and were encouraged because of the open-door policies (p. 172). These open-door policies for communication also made them feel as though their opinions and concerns were heard, which lead to their attitudes of feeling safe within their school (Swars et al., 2009). These thoughts are crucial for not only new teachers, but also veterans who may otherwise be considering leaving the field if they are not able to actively voice their opinions, concerns, or feel safe while they are at work. Ultimately Swars et al. offer in their recommendations that if administrators want to reduce attrition rates, it is essential to apply their two-dimensional model of 'Teacher Retention and Mobility' (2009).

In looking at Texas specifically, Bolich (2001) records, "nearly 20 percent...left teaching after their first year because of a lack of professional support" (p. 6). Bolich also lists that new teachers having to "sink or swim" within their first years of teaching leads them to leave early in their careers (2001). This sink or swim philosophy is no secret within the profession as to why many teachers leave—not only in Texas but is a significant problem that continues not to be addressed appropriately.



In the case of special education teachers, Vittek (2015) noted that proper support from an administrator could eliminate role confusion, in turn increasing retention. Researchers Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) testify that when staff morale is low, as guided by school leadership, this leads to a frequent turnover. Additionally, when also given peer support, Billingsley (2004) notes that teachers are more likely to stay in their position. This support does not solely mean a mentorship program, but simply coworkers who are committed to working together in a positive manner.

In a policy brief from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007), researchers found that high-needs urban and rural schools have overwhelmingly high turnover due to a "frustrating lack of support" (p.2). Young (2018) details the frustration that principals have each summer in racing against the clock to hire new teachers, especially within inner-city schools with higher rates of turnover year after year. Additionally, in a more recent article about "Hard to Staff Schools," authors Holmes, Parker, and Gibson (2019), summarize the importance of maintaining positive leadership in order to promote retention and have a favorable impact on student success rates. They also note that "effective principals may influence teacher retention by addressing other student outcomes that closely affect teachers, such as making efforts to reduce suspension rates and improving graduation rates" (Holmes, Parker & Gibson, 2019, p. 30). It is important to both recognize and remember that teacher attrition rates and the failure to retain teachers each year ultimately impact students the most, especially in high-needs and urban areas around the country.

Notably, Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2014) discovered that higher retention across all grade levels is possible when a principal modeled support of a teacher's

decision in front of others, recognized contributions, or identified a job well done. In fact, Bolich adds, 82% of teachers would “prefer to teach at a school with strong support for teachers by administration” (2001, p. 7). Scholar Kelchtermans (2017) affirms this statement and laments that staff needs to feel trusted and valued as professionals from both the administration and social peers. Ingersoll et al. (2019) confirms this sentiment in stating “schools with higher levels of schoolwide faculty decision-making influence had lower levels of turnover for both nonminority and minority teachers” (p. 25). Kaden, Patterson, Healy, and Adams (2016) insist more open communication with the administration about working conditions plays a vital role in retention. Urick (2016) found that teachers were less likely to leave if they were at a school with a high-responding principal.

In contrast, “principals perceived their support for teachers was greater than the support the teachers felt they received,” so it is essential that principals are reflective and genuinely mindful of the support they are providing to the staff (Hughes, Matt, & O’Reilly, 2014, p. 132). To be even more proactive, principals should be mindful of hiring teachers who show favorable qualities and long-term commitment, rather than hiring haphazardly (Young, 2018). Administrators who are both aware and supportive of events going on at their school with the teachers can lead to both a positive relationship with staff and a long-term group of employees.

### **Undergraduate Program Preparedness**

A commonality found across many studies references undergraduate program preparedness. Generally speaking, there are significant gaps in most programs for scholars who are preparing to become a teacher in either the public or private sector.

According to Kaufman and Al-Bataineh (2011) a large percentage of teachers do not feel their college program prepared them for their classroom experience. If one were to conduct a simple survey of first-year teachers, many would share in this sentiment of not feeling as though they were prepared for what they encountered during their first year in the classroom.

Gilpin (2011) suggests that a practicum experience within the classroom during an undergraduate program can contribute to the likelihood that a teacher will stay at their first school. A New-York based study by Ronfeldt (2012) supports the idea that student teaching experiences within schools with low turnover rates, easier to staff schools, leads to more prolonged success for teachers within the first five years of their careers.

Additionally, these teachers were able to more easily raise student test scores and overall student achievement (Ronfeldt, 2012). In detail, De Stercke, Goyette, and Robertson (2015) note “more effective advising of students prior to and immediately upon entering teacher education is essential in reducing the rate at which new teachers abandon the profession” (p. 422). Scholar Kelly (2004) maintains the belief that more requirements in the beginning during teacher training could lead to higher retention rates in the long run. For example, methods classes, professional development, state certification, and maintaining membership within an organization are all requirements that could impact a teacher’s initial decision to remain in the field (Kelly, 2004). Kaden, Patterson, Healy, and Adams (2016) offer the sentiment that often within the first two years’ teachers are expected to perform at high-levels. When they do not demonstrate this ability, they may be let go instead of properly trained with additional professional development (Kaden et

al., 2016). They also express that there should be better induction programs to help new teachers understand the “cultural context” of the school (Kaden et al., 2016, p. 141).

Researchers Goldhaber and Cowan found that in a study of many college preparation programs both in-state and out-of-state: new teachers left at the same rate as the national level (15.5%), and stated that in order to “increase the effectiveness of new teachers, there needs to be improvement in the quality of teacher preparation programs” (2014, p.460). Remarkably, when noting the teaching certification exam, Boyd et al. found that the teachers who had passed on the first try were much more likely to leave the profession than their counterparts who did not pass on the first attempt (2011, p. 322). In the case of urban schools, investigator Jacob (2007) found that teachers tend to have fewer credentials and less experience in comparison to their suburban counterparts. Those educators are also less likely to have graduated from a competitive college (Jacob, 2007).

Bolich (2001) adds that in Texas, explicitly, 25% of new teachers were not certified to teach in their hired area, and only 14 states required student teaching in a multicultural setting. However, in an interesting study conducted by Overschelde, Saunders, and Ash (2017), they found when a unique middle-level certification program was employed through Texas State University, the retention rates were significantly higher at 85% after five years, in comparison to the state, local and non-profit averages that ranged between 62% to 71%. The success of this program is attributed to the following factors: having students learn from tenured faculty who also worked closely with them throughout the entire program and even lesson planned together; requiring the student to experience schools that represented current state demographics (not just the

“exemplary” schools which are often common sites for student teaching); requiring the student to volunteer and attend extracurriculars, as well as take part in professional development outside of school (“hidden curriculum”); and build relationships with faculty and school personnel (Overschelde, Saunders, & Ash, 2017). The requirements that the students were expected to fulfill are incredibly aligned to what a ‘real’ teacher encounters within their career and should not be seen as foreign, although most teacher preparation programs do not carry such requests. Additionally, it is imperative to note that their student teaching experience was one year long, rather than the typical one-semester requirement that many university programs require. In having these stricter requirements and much more faculty support than a typical university teacher program, the students were able to find success as teachers and remain in the field past the five-year mark. The authors of the article strongly recommend that other teacher preparation programs work with the local districts and maintain tenured faculty which can facilitate field-based courses to best suit the needs of the students and realistically prepare them for a long term career in education (Overschelde, Saunders, & Ash, 2017).

The policy brief by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future highlights the importance of “building on federal and state funding directed toward improved teacher preparation and comprehensive induction programs” to increase retention efforts (2007, p. 9). In a study conducted by Zhang and Zeller (2016), when comparing three types of teacher preparation programs: ‘regular’ through a university education program, ‘lateral entry alternative licensure’ one who has any type of bachelor’s degree and takes a sink or swim approach to teaching through alternative licensure, or a ‘special alternative licensure program’ which is “designed to ease non-

education majors into teaching and support them in a teaching career;” Zhang and Zeller found that the less prepared lateral entry license holders were retained at a much lower rate in comparison to the other two types both long and short term from years three to seven (2016, p. 75). The study also notes the importance of pedagogy training both before and after entering the actual teaching profession—not just after as the lateral teachers experienced (Zhang and Zeller, 2016). In a cited interview with well-known scholar Dr. D. Ray Reutzel, Martin and Mulvihill (2016) highlight Dr. Reutzel’s sentiment about how often times university programs are not relevant or even attached to current work in schools, but instead are too theoretical in nature, thus not appropriately preparing future educators for what they will face in a real-world classroom. There is an extraordinary need for alignment between both the real-world classroom and theoretical teaching, yet many programs do not meet this simple requirement (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). As one can see, there are various pathways to becoming a teacher and these ultimately are determined by individual state Education boards and committees. Yet many of these programs, university based or alternative certification program based, continue to fall short in terms of how prepared the teacher has become before entering the classroom. Because so many new teachers have stated they have felt unprepared for the challenges that teaching presents; therefore, it is essential to offer more opportunities at the undergraduate level to meet and engage in these future experiences. There is likewise a need for both universities and local school districts to be more collaborative and communicative to ensure a smoother transition for first-year teachers. This partnership between universities and districts could also extend into the next theme: mentorship.

## **Mentoring**

Mentoring can be seen through many different variations across studies. For example, in the study by Martinez, Frick, Kim, and Fried (2010), the researchers found that retired teachers who volunteer within a classroom help to increase a teacher's feeling of success. This could involve purposeful guiding, or simply being an extra set of eyes to ensure students were focused during the teacher's lesson (Martinez et al., 2010).

Additionally, these investigators note that the volunteers can provide not only mentorship but also emotional support to teachers (Martinez et al., 2010). These volunteers were able to improve the overall work environment, thus helping not only the teacher but also the students (Martinez et al., 2010). Because first-year teachers are presented with so many challenges, this type of support becomes necessary. Methods to reduce isolation are essential to keeping new teachers within the field (Gilbert, 2011).

Carr, Holmes, and Flynn (2017) list three different types of mentorship: mentoring, coaching, and self-mentoring. Traditional mentoring "focuses on several goals over a long period of time," and the mentor has more control because they are the guiding force in the relationship (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017, p. 121). This is the most commonly used type of mentorship found throughout school campuses with new teacher programs. Coaching is short-term and generally has one specific goal, while self-mentoring involves only the person setting goals and expectations for themselves (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017). In looking at the three different variations, it is essential for the administration to be familiar with their staff to know which would best suit their individual needs. Some staff members may require a combination of the three, rather than just one. It also depends on what year the new teacher is in because the type of

mentorship can certainly change each year. However, figuring out what plan is best “is an investment which will pay in dividends” (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017).

Clustering groups of teachers with alumni was used as a strategy within a study by Hansen, Backes, and Brady (2016) to which the researchers found that there was a reduction in teachers leaving their school. In another study, Bolich (2001) devotes an entire subsection to the importance of support for new teachers. Unmistakably, she states that quality mentoring through induction programs “are the greatest tools that states can give new teachers” (p.8). These induction programs involve mentorship to a teacher for their first few years in the classroom and can be made up of an entire support team, potentially (Bolich, 2001). Ronfeldt (2012) confirms that mentorship is essential within a positive learning environment, and ultimately most teachers are learning the most from each other rather than administration or other leaders. The 2007 policy brief affirms the idea that many good teachers leave because they are “left to fend for themselves without the collegial mentoring and coaching support they need to succeed” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, p. 6). Bolich adds that “studies show that teachers with less than five years of experience who have not participated in induction programs are nearly twice as likely to leave teaching” (2001, p. 8). Statistically, this is a serious problem. Because not all states participate in induction programs, this leaves room for improvement when it comes to retention efforts.

When looking specifically at high poverty schools, investigators Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) found that those teachers placed mentorship high on their list when considering whether or not to stay at their current school. Authors Hughes, Matt, and O’Reilly (2014) agree that when it comes to hard-to-staff schools, mentorship, as led by



the administration, is vital. However, on average, ‘mentorship’ was only “somewhat” important when considering all types of schools (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018, p. 613).

Mentorship can be an easy asset to any new teacher, but the administrators on campus need to take note and put measures in place to create an environment of cooperation and collaboration between new and veteran teachers. Because there are different varieties of mentorship, the administration should do its due diligence to ensure that it is best meeting the needs of each teacher—not only the first year but in the subsequent years to follow. Depending on the school and teacher, mentorship can be facilitated in a structured or more relaxed manner to meet the specific needs of the novice educator.

### **Work Environment**

A teacher’s work environment can seriously affect their decision to remain or leave their school. Factors within the environment, such as school culture and working conditions, played a major role in retention rates over the past years.

According to Gilpin (2011), new teachers’ intent to leave is increased by eight percentage points if they feel threatened by a student. Gilpin notes that the work environment and conditions play a more prominent role in teacher retention choice than salary (2010). In comparison to the study by Clotfelter, Glennie, Ladd, and Vigdor (2008), it endorses the idea that working conditions are in-fact more important than income. A study completed by Wells (2015) suggests turnover rates rise due to workloads that are continuously being increased, and the findings of Lindqvist, Nordanger, and Carlsson (2014) offer the same suggestion: that work overload, contributes to teachers leaving. Additionally, if teachers are left out of the mix when it

comes to working conditions and accountability of the school organization, this also leads to teachers feeling isolated and more likely to leave (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Correspondingly, Hughes notes that reducing teacher workloads can improve retention rates (2012). Likewise, Bolich (2001) mentions that in some states, first-year teachers are prohibited from taking on additional responsibilities, such as extracurriculars, to ensure their initial workload is not overwhelming. This is a good positive step in the right direction for the first year, but can potentially become problematic in subsequent years when they are expected to participate in activities before or after school or extracurriculars.

Role overload, student behavior, and large class size are additional work environment factors that can cause a teacher to want to leave the profession (Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). School culture has a substantial impact on retention rates, and teachers need to be able to interact with their colleagues because they “yearn for an intellectually stimulating community” (Scheopner, 2010, p. 275). In helping with this issue, a school may consider starting a climate or sunshine committee to make it a bit more personal for its staff.

When schools are suffering from constant turnover, it burdens the staff to continually retrain new hires (Jacob, 2007). This retraining not only takes away time from their already over-loaded schedules but also adds stress for feeling the need to help and be available to the new employees who are unfamiliar with both the curriculum and school environment. Scholars Geiger and Pivovarova offer: “Teachers from poorly performing schools, overall, were frustrated and displeased with many aspects of their schools’ working conditions, but most notably school leadership” (2018, p. 616).

Leadership being a problem; again, relates to the number one reason why most teachers leave the field within five years.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Billingsley (2004) states that educators will stay in teaching if they have a favorable view of their workplace and environment. People who are happy about their job and the people around them have both a positive attitude and mindset, which can transfer into their teaching. When teachers are happier, the students are, as well. No one wants to be tied to a workplace that seems stressful, energy-draining, and burdensome. Administrators need to keep this piece in mind when considering the needs of both novice and veteran teachers alike.

### **Salary**

A common misconception as to why teachers leave the field within the first five years is a typically exaggerated statement that proclaims teachers are underpaid, so that is the basis to why they end up leaving their schools. While educators do stand to make, on average, 20% less than other similarly trained professionals, as stated by Darling-Hammond (2003), salary is not the main reason as to why most educators leave the field. Ingersoll et al. (2019) confirms that schools that offer higher salary show lower rates of attrition, especially in the case of minority teachers, however, administration, accountability, and discipline problems are ultimately much bigger factors (p. 21). The media tends to overplay and sensationalize this sentiment that “greedy” teachers want more money and because they do not get it, that is why they ultimately leave. This outlook shown through the media is incorrect. Across countless articles, the top three reasons include administrative support, undergraduate preparation, and work

environment, as previously stated above. However, towards the end of the list, one will indeed find salary.

In a quantitative study centered around an urban disadvantaged school district in Texas, researchers Shifrer, Lopez-Turley, and Heard (2017) discovered that when offered a ‘salary award’ for their performance, ranging from \$1,200 to \$3,500, there was little to no benefit shown on the outcome of whether a teacher left or stayed. Remarkably, they state that it is imperative to highlight the fact that actually, “the teachers who received a large award were less likely than teachers who received a small award to be retained in the district” (Shifrer, Lopez-Turley, & Heard, 2017, p. 1146). At the end of their study, they do recommend that teachers in high-needs, low socioeconomic areas are paid more based on the value they hold within these types of schools (Shifrer, Lopez-Turley, & Heard, 2017). Another Texas-based three-year study by Martinez-Garcia, Slate, and Tejeda-Delgado (2009) revealed that salary is linked to retention rates at 20%. Precisely, there is more retention within districts that offer higher salaries (Martinez-Garcia, Slate, & Tejeda-Delgado, 2009). The authors note that more research is needed in the future surrounding this variable within teacher turnover.

Equally, in a study by Kelly (2004), when examining a multitude of different factors that could potentially influence attrition, he found that raising salaries had a very minimal impact, and its approximately 3% impact was mainly on new teachers and teachers who were well into their potential retirement years. Interestingly, Warshauer-Freedman and Appleman (2009), found that when there is a greater financial incentive tied to teaching within a high-needs low-performing school for a set period of time, such as in the case of the Multicultural Urban Secondary English program which they studied,

where there was a \$20,000 incentive if the teachers stayed at least four years, they showed higher rates of retention at “88% still employed as of their fifth year in teaching” (p. 329). If more monetary incentives such as this example were offered to more students or beginning educators, administrators might see an increase in retention rates across the country, although this was just one study that showed success. More information would be needed to see if this could be a viable long term solution to helping fix the retention crisis.

Martin and Mulvihill (2016) reiterate that when states raise their pay, as tied to staff expectations, there are more applicants interested in the available teaching positions, in comparison to surrounding states that have lower rates of pay. The rate of pay differences across states can be phenomenal. For example, starting teachers in Minnesota stand to make around \$38,000, while first-year teachers in Texas can make well above \$50,000 in major districts. This is a central component of the retention issue, but not the primary one.

Addressing salary as a potential factor that influences teacher retention rates may swing one way or another depending on the state examined. Because some states pay much higher than others, there can be bias within each article depending on the state being studied. Generally, people interested in teaching are not doing it because they think they are going to get some enormous paycheck. They realize that they will never be millionaires--maybe not even hit \$100,000 in earnings each year unless they are in a higher-level position which takes additional schooling. They are typically extremely aware of the fact that teachers are not paid what they deserve, and there is no potential for yearly bonuses or other perks that people who work in other sectors are accustomed to on

a regular basis. People who choose to pursue studies in education are aware of this before they invest in studying to become a teacher. Instead, they choose to become an instructor because they realize the notable impact they can have on a child's life. They may come from a family of educators or may have known from a young age that it is something they are interested in pursuing. Salary is seldom the main factor for a teacher deciding to leave the field, but instead, it is a multitude of all those other factors previously mentioned. Low-salary is simply the cherry on top, which can drive a teacher out for good. Not having to take work home every night or lesson plan every weekend without additional pay looks pretty good to a lot of people who choose to leave the field. Perhaps if we paid teachers what they deserved, such as in the case of other teachers around the world who regard teachers as high as doctors, lawyers, or other reputable professionals, then maybe they would be more prone to stay. Consequently, the administration would take their tenure more seriously rather than trying to replace them all the time with younger, inexperienced teachers just coming out of college or another alternative certification program.

### **Cost of Teacher Turnover**

Many district level officials may not even realize this, but the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers is exceptionally high. While some administrators carry the mentality that it is easy to 'simply replace a teacher,' this is not a long-term solution and is not cost-effective, either. Considering there are countless districts facing tremendous budget cuts to the tune of millions of dollars, the administration needs to start considering this problem more seriously. This decision to closely examine the retention problem does not only involve principals but higher district-level officials, as well.

Although newly graduated educators may be a bit cheaper to hire, the cost of losing an already employed, trained, and experienced teacher outweighs the initial price break on the hiring of the new teacher. In a 2003 article by scholar Linda Darling-Hammond, she reports the “heavy” costs of attrition. Precisely, when looking at Texas, “a 40 percent turnover rate for public school teachers in their first three years costs the state a “conservative” \$329 million per year or at least \$8,000 per recruit who leaves within the first few years of teaching” (Hammond, 2003, p. 7). Carr, Holmes, and Flynn state that the cost of losing a first-year teacher is around \$17,000 (2017). Money is also lost by having to hire new teachers and provide them with mentorship to the tune of \$4,000 or more (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017). Multiply these numbers by thousands of teachers leaving the field: it is a tremendous financial problem for our already fragile education system.

Another study by Glazer (2018) examined why 25 teachers with masters’ degrees or higher certification left the field within the first three years in education. Although they had found abundant moments of success within the classroom, many of them ended up leaving due to policies and ultimately being unable to teach as a trained professional (Glazer, 2018). This is a common sentiment that numerous teachers express and become frustrated about during their tenure: the inability to teach to the best of their students’ needs, instead of being forced to follow a very vanilla curriculum that the district has adopted. Even after they left, Glazer cites that 23 of the 25 were never questioned about their decision to leave the field--a mistake that innumerable districts continue to make each year (Glazer, 2018). Glazer notes that if administrators were to question teachers on

their exit, we could learn a lot from them and potentially impact teacher attrition rates (2018).

An international study by Holmyard (2016) of teachers from the United States who are currently teaching in schools around the world offers that retention is at the forefront of many international principal's minds due to the realization of cost to recruit, rehire, and retrain. These principals within the study offer that they understand the importance of the communication they have and maintain with their teachers, as well as the support and training they provide (Holmyard, 2016).

Darling-Hammond (2003) suggests that we invest more in the initial preparation programs for teachers to save money in the long run when it comes to retention rates. Another study notes that in just one district, millions of dollars could be saved if they could consistently retain new teachers at a higher percentage rate each year (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page & Marinell, 2017). This is an obvious sentiment, yet most administration fails to recognize its bearing.

Another more recently discovered the cost to the retention crisis was noted by scholar Kelchtermans (2017). Kelchtermans states there is an additional public health cost to losing teachers due to excessive stress or burnout (2017). Based on personal knowledge and having known hundreds of educators throughout the country, the amount of educators on anti-depressants, anxiety medication, high blood pressure medication, and the like is outrageous and many would be shocked to know that it is, so 'normal' for teachers to take them throughout the school year, but not during the summer. This shows another factor that can cause a teacher to want to leave the profession. However,



ultimately, this absenteeism and eventual leaving from the field could be positively impacted if the administration were to implement a volunteer retired teachers program, as cited by Martinez, Frick, Kim, and Fried (2010).

The monetary cost is not the only issue. It is essential to mention the productivity cost, as well. When districts are continually replacing teachers with novices, while the cost may go down in terms of starting salary rates, the actual cost of productivity is substantial (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page & Marinell, 2017). Replacing an educator with another who has absolutely no actual full-time classroom experience requires additional training, mentoring, and time devoted to helping them become successful within their first year. Because one single person does not merely take on this task, instead, multiple people throughout the school campus are unable to be as productive as they could be if the original teacher had remained at the same school. When veteran teachers are constantly asked to take on this additional responsibility, it creates a negative culture and can add to their feelings of wanting to leave the field, as well, due to role overload.

Another point to consider is the experience gained through actually teaching one's own class. This experience is not easily replicated within a University or alternative certification program. The amount of real-life knowledge gained within the first year of teaching is tremendous and should not be taken for granted by administration. Years two through four give educators a chance to hone in on their skills and to most importantly figure out their most-effective classroom management style. Ask any educator--current or past, and they will affirm that nothing prepares you for teaching more than having to experience it head-on and at full speed with 20 to 35 students of your own. When we lose these teachers within their first few years, we not only lose their monetary value, but

we also lose all the knowledge and skills gained through actual teaching experience.

Administrators, district-level officials, and educational policymakers must pay attention and consider both the monetary and productivity costs when faced with the retention dilemma.

## **Conclusion**

As stated, several apparent themes contribute to the success or failure of teacher retention proportions over the last decade. While some experts will offer there are additional factors, such as location, parental support, or type of school, most studies highlight the significance of administrative support, undergraduate preparation, mentoring, and the work environment. The research solidifies that it is imperative for administrators and educational leaders to realize that it is subjective and based on each individual person. This subjectivity typically involves more than only one main factor. Studies have shown that teachers do not decide to leave at the drop of a hat, but rather it is a drawn-out emotional process. This change is a decision that is not to be made or taken lightly. Through the information presented, it shows the importance of administrators who are willing to have continual conversations with their new staff especially, but also their tenured staff, to ensure continued success with their personnel. This practice and effort can facilitate learning and retain quality teachers. Administration and the efforts they put forth is only one factor within the puzzle of retention and other factors must be examined and considered.

In moving towards making a change to promote the attainment of our current teachers within the system, it is important to address these chief issues with retention rates, as well as hear about personal experiences from veteran teachers who have chosen

to stay within education, despite the current circumstances. In doing so, it is possible to begin to develop and gain a better understanding of how we can promote longevity within the field.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of why teachers at Title I schools stay for more than five years. This study sought to discover any common reasons and potential strategies for promoting teacher retention overall. This chapter explains the research questions, method of data collection, and analysis used to conduct this study.

#### **Research Question**

This study aimed to answer the following question:

1. What is the teachers' perception as to what factors, both internal and external; motivate educators to continue teaching longer than the typical five-year span within a Title I school?

#### **Methodology Selected**

The method of research design for this study on teacher retention was qualitative. Qualitative research is beneficial because it “calls for close interaction between researcher and participants...ultimately allow[ing] the researcher to develop a more holistic understanding of the setting” (Sallee & Flood, 2012, p. 139). As Creswell specifies, a qualitative study involves a smaller sample size and in-depth interviews and observations (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative method of study was appropriate for this investigation because it focused on personal experiences and reasoning as to why teachers have chosen to stay in the field for more than five years. More specifically, a case-study research was used because it gave “a rich and insightful look at an individual

or group...to give readers a unique look at the research targets” (Shank & Brown, 2007, p. 65). The employment of this method is essential because it aims to capture the participant’s voice, as Onwuegbuzie and Leech noted is an important component of qualitative research (2005). Thus, a qualitative method is appropriate for this research project.

### **Case Study Methodology**

The methodological framework used for this study was a case study. A case study is a qualitative method that is used to develop a deep understanding of a shared event or experience (Sauro, 2015). This method was appropriate because it employs the use of in-depth interviews. Specifically, the researcher can “explore real-life, contemporary bounded system[s] (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96). Additionally, this method was used because, in a case study, it involves “no more than four to five cases” (Guetterman, 2015, p. 4). This study used only three participants in keeping within the restrictions of a case study.

Furthermore, according to Creswell and Poth (2018) a defining feature of a case study is the fact that it is “bounded” by a specific place, certain people, or timeframe (p.97). This study took place within a large Texas district with particular people over a short period of time. More specifically, this was a singular case study because “the researcher focused on an issue or concern” and studied a particular group (case) to illustrate the issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 98). Therefore, a case study framework was appropriate for this investigation.

### **The Researcher**

The researcher in this study has professionally worked in education for six years. She currently holds an Associate's degree in Liberal Arts, Bachelor of Arts in International Relations (focus on War, Peace, and Conflict Resolution), Bachelor of Science in Political Science, Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction (Elementary Education, specialty), certification in Library and Information Science, and is pursuing a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership (focus on social and urban education). She previously worked in Title I schools in Texas schools before moving back to Minnesota to work for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux community as an educational liaison for Native American students. The teachers who were interviewed for this study had not previously maintained a close relationship with the researcher; therefore, no bias was implicated.

The researcher has previously worked within Title I schools in both Texas and Minnesota. She currently is a Title I teacher within a Minnesota district, although the Title I population is much lower than the schools she previously taught in Texas. The researcher has a background in teacher retention efforts in being the chair for past Social or Climate committees on various campuses. She also had previous knowledge of retention being an issue. This was due to witnessing it first-hand at the campuses she was employed at with low attrition rates each school year ranging from 25-40% in some cases. This sparked her interest in why certain teachers stay and others leave within the first five years of their careers. This experience was the basis for her study.

## **Participant Selection and Setting**

The participants were purposely selected based on the needs of this study. According to Merriam, purposive sampling is, “based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (1988, p. 48). More specifically, critical case sampling was employed. To clarify further, critical case sampling focuses on choosing a few important cases (participants) to “yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (Patton, 2015, p. 276). The sample size was small at just three participants, because, as Guetterman states, a case study should have up to five only (2015).

The study took place within Texas, which had many Title I elementary schools within its boundaries. The criteria used for selecting potential participants included: first, selecting teachers who have been teaching in Texas for more than five years; then, teachers, who have been teaching for more than five years at a Title I school in Houston, TX (without ever being placed on an Improvement Plan); and finally, narrowing it down to teachers who have been teaching at the same Title I school in Houston, TX for more than five years. The participants were from the same district, although not from the same exact school, and were selected from a social network of peers. Initial interest forms and clarifying information files about the research study were emailed out to five potential participants. Through the results of the email responses, three participants were purposefully selected for the study. The three participants were identified as Leon, Kacey, and Azalea.

Leon was a Hispanic male teacher who worked at an elementary school. He was unmarried and did not have children of his own. This man was a bilingual teacher and very concise in his interview responses. He would have the shortest interview times recorded.

Kacey was a White female who started her career in education as a paraprofessional. She was unmarried and had one child of her own. This woman was an elementary teacher at a school with over 90% of minority students. Kacey enjoyed thoroughly answering each question during all rounds of interviewing and member-checking and provided the most in-depth answers for most of the questions posed.

Azalea was an African American female who came with the most teaching experience, overall. At 30 years' experience and 20 of those years being in Title I, she proved to be an asset to the study in gaining valuable information about retention. Azalea was unmarried and had one son. Her interview times were not as long as Kacey's, but longer than Leon's. This provided the researcher with a lot of great information to use within the study.

Choosing Leon, Kacey, and Azalea was based on the "Employed Teacher Demographics" table published by the Texas Education Agency, where 75% of teachers are female, and 25% are male within the state of Texas (2017). This study reflected close to those demographics in the sampling size of having two female participants and one male participant. Through choosing participants with varied ethnicities, it provided a more unique perspective. The demographics of the participants within this study are shown below in Table 1.



Table 1

*Research Participants Demographics Chart*

| Identifier | Gender | Ethnicity        | Years of Full-Time Professional Teaching Experience | Years of Title I Teaching Experience |
|------------|--------|------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Leon       | Male   | Hispanic         | 14  | 14                                   |
| Kacey      | Female | White            | 7   | 13*                                  |
| Azalea     | Female | African American | 30  | 20                                   |

*\*Note: T2 has 13 total years working within a Title I school, however 6 years were as a paraprofessional*

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Interviews were used as the data source for answering the research question about retention. The case study was bounded by location, amount of people included in the sample size, and time frame. This study sought to recognize and identify internal and external factors which have impacted three Title I teachers who have taught longer than the national average.

Through the collection of interviews and through member-checking, themes and subthemes emerged from the case study data. This information identified both internal and external factors which not only impacted the three educators, but also gave insight as to their perceptions about what is causing teachers to leave the profession, rather than to stay as they have for many years above the average.

**Method of Data Analysis and Procedures**

Because the methodological framework used for this study is qualitative: in-depth interviews were conducted as the method for collecting data. This allowed the interview

participants to be questioned using broad, open-ended questions, which was important to understanding the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

An initial interest email was emailed out to five peers who were currently employed at various Title I schools within Texas. This email can be found in Appendix A. Because this was sent out to a social network of peers, I was already aware of their tenure status of a teacher being longer than five years, although not initially assured about the extent of their total years of service in education. I was not certain about whether or not any of them had been previously placed on improvement plans, and because two of the potential participants stated they had been on one in the past, this eliminated them from taking part in the study. The sample size still aligned with case-study research at only three participants.

Upon feedback, and answering questions about potentially participating in the study, two female teachers and one male teacher who were most qualified and experienced to partake in the study were invited to participate in the study.

I contacted each teacher to ask if they would like to participate in the study and gave an overview of what the request would entail. Upon agreement, a consent form to participate in the study was sent, and following the receipt of the form, an initial interview was scheduled at their convenience.

Table 2

*Data Collection Plan*

| Research Question   | Data Collection<br>Instruments | Data Analysis   |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>What is the teachers' perception as to what factors, both internal and external; motivate educators to continue teaching longer than the typical five-year span within a Title I school?</b> | <b>Teacher Interviews</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of repeated words</li> <li>• Development of initial themes</li> <li>• Development of subthemes</li> </ul> |
|   | <b>Member-Checking Session</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification of themes</li> </ul>   |

**Teacher Interviews.** Because the methodological framework used for this study was qualitative: in-depth interviews were conducted as the method for collecting data of the teachers' perceptions of retention. The interviews were conducted after a teacher qualified for the study. After, three candidates were judiciously selected. Once the three interviewees were chosen, an initial interview was held via Zoom. Zoom is an online video/audio-based conference platform. It is a paid service that allows the user to also record the entirety of the audio or video call. This service allowed for easier manual transcription. Zoom does offer a transcription service, but only for business accounts or

higher, therefore private transcription was ordered and performed. After the first interview and transcription were completed, a follow-up interview was done based on the participant's initial answers to allow for member-checking, more time, and clarification.

Live audio-based interviews were conducted based on the ability of each participant. The platform for the interviews used was Zoom, an online meeting platform. The participants and investigator were both able to remain at their homes or a private room during each of the interviews to maintain the confidentiality of both the participant and the study. Participants completed the interview through audio either on their personal computer via the Zoom application or the Zoom application on their cell phone. Each interview was recorded in its entirety. The interview included an introduction time of no more than ten minutes, and the remainder of the time used was for the nineteen open-ended questions each participant was required to answer. Each question was carefully selected to attribute to an overall idea of why these teachers have remained in teaching at a Title I school for more than the typical five-year tenure. The average length per interview was 34 minutes and 19 seconds.

The first interview included 19 questions and can be found in Appendix C. The second interview included 14 questions, as well as two additional questions per specific participant. These exact questions can also be found in Appendix C. All interviews and member-checking took place over a period of 26 days in length. None of the participants were ever interviewed on the same day, which allowed for more flexibility and time for manual transcription for the researcher. Member checks were conducted, and data resulting from member checks were included as sources of data used within the findings.

All information collected through this study was put into Word or Excel documents on a protected computer available only to the researcher and was kept under two passwords. Pseudonyms were given to all three teacher participants to maintain their confidentiality within the study.

The information collected from the study was used to determine themes and subthemes for illustrating what internal or external motivations had influenced the three teachers to remain in education longer than the five-year average.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analyzed within this study was qualitative. The information collected was through audio interviews. Following the conclusion of the audio-based interviews, the information was transcribed before being analyzed.

Because the study conducted was qualitative, the analysis method sought to “uncover themes or categories most relevant to the research objectives” (Thomas, 2006, p. 241).

Further, as taken from Creswell and Poth (2018), the following table describes the steps to case study analysis:

Table 3

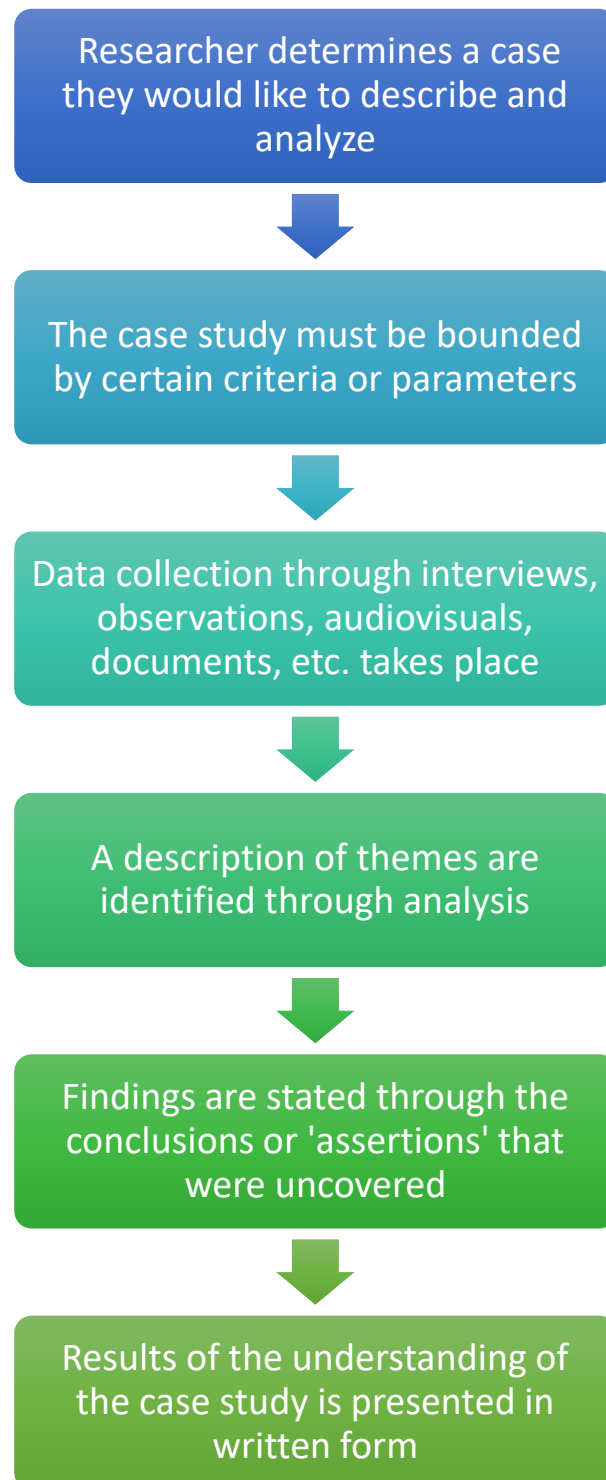
*Case Study Analysis Process*

| Analysis of Case Study Data   |
|---|
| <b>The researcher creates and organizes data into files.</b>  |
| <b>The researcher reads through text, makes margin notes, and forms initial codes.</b>                    |
| <b>The researcher describes the case and its context.</b>   |
| <b>The researcher uses categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns.</b>                       |
| <b>The researcher uses direct interpretation to develop generalizations of what was learned. (p. 199)</b> |

Additionally, the process for analysis of the case study data in a more straightforward visual and terms can be seen as displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Features of a Case Study (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 97-98)*



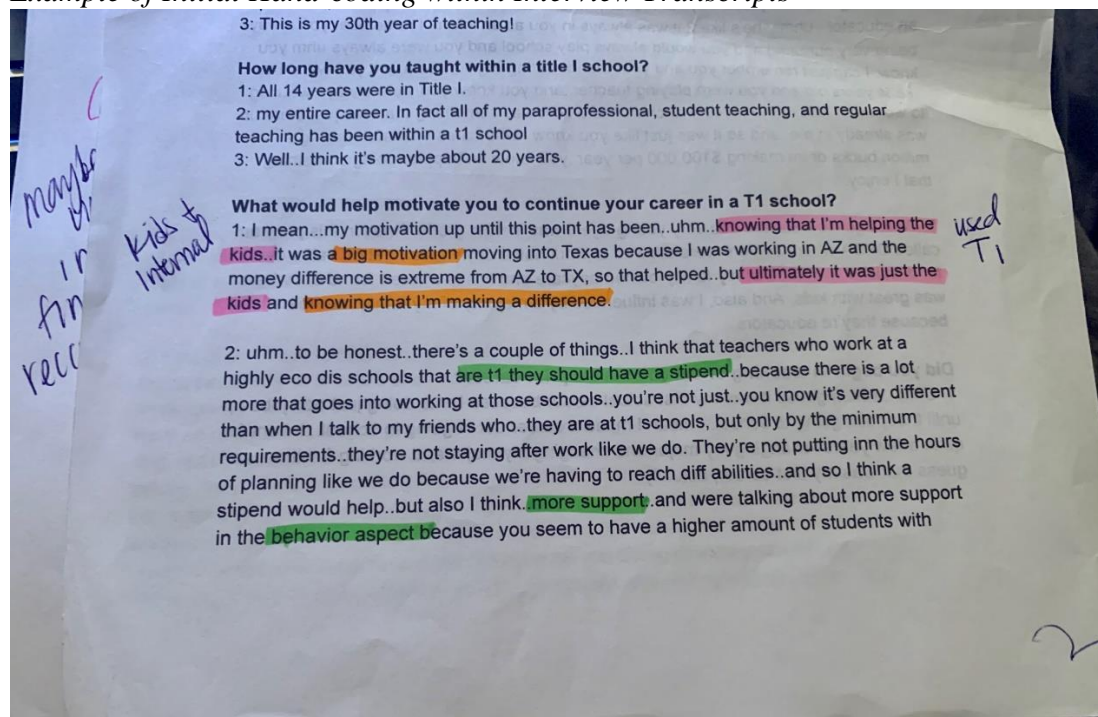
Ultimately, there were assertions or conclusions that were discovered through the conduction and analysis of the case study on teacher retention. This study identifies those themes as shared by the three participants.

### **Coding**

The process of coding the data was employed for this study. Coding within a case study involved “pulling the data apart and back together in more meaningful ways” (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.206). Initially, transcribed interviews were reviewed many, many times, to find emerging themes within each set of interviews. The significant statements were identified. Highlighting in numerous colors, underlining, and noting keywords were primarily coded out from the information presented within each interview from all of the teacher participants. Lists of potential major themes were recorded within a notebook each time the information was reviewed. Eventually, this list of potential themes was narrowed down to four. There were a total of 97 significant statements made regarding the four major themes identified. Figure 2 offers a small example of the hand-coding that was employed for this study.



Figure 2

*Example of Initial Hand-coding within Interview Transcripts*

Further coding via locating keywords and repeated words revealed the list of subthemes. Initially, this process was completed through hand-coding. A web was created to highlight all major themes and subthemes. Additional verification of coding was completed through Microsoft Excel to categorize the information found more easily. Each participant and the frequency in which they referred to the top ten most used words are shown below in the Coding Matrix Table 4.

Table 4  
*Coding Matrix Table*

|               | <b>Kids</b> | <b>Administration</b> | <b>Support</b> | <b>Principal</b> | <b>Stress</b> | <b>Climate</b> | <b>Stipend</b> | <b>Mental Health</b> | <b>Appreciation</b> | <b>Internal</b> |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Leon</b>   | 13          | 12                    | 4              | 10               | 5             | 5              | 3              | 3                    | 2                   | 2               |
| <b>Kacey</b>  | 26          | 18                    | 17             | 7                | 9             | 6              | 7              | 3                    | 3                   | 3               |
| <b>Azalea</b> | 15          | 5                     | 8              | 9                | 7             | 6              | 5              | 4                    | 4                   | 3               |

**Ethical Considerations**

Before the conduction of the study, permission was obtained through the International Review Board (IRB) process. Because there was no potential harm or risks for the participants, confidentiality and anonymity would be upheld from start to finish; the application was approved, and the study was able to begin with the disbursement of emails. The final permissions received were from the three interview participants within the study, although to protect and maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, these forms are not included within the Appendix sections. Once all permissions were received, the study was able to move forward in collecting the subsequent interview information. No monetary payment or other sort of gift was given to the participants within this study; it was completely voluntary. The participants were aware that they could choose to remove themselves from the study at any point in time, although none chose to do so and the study was successfully concluded.

**Limitations**

A major limitation of this study was the fact that it was conducted within only a few schools and used the interview data from only three participants. The sample size was quite small. Because it is so focused, in the future, it would be best to expand both the school choices and the number of participants who are selected to be interviewed. Instead of focusing on only one major district, it would be helpful to examine many districts both large and small.

Another limitation is the location in which the data was collected. It was one district within Texas. When conducting future research surrounding this topic, it would be beneficial to collect interview data from several of Title I schools across the nation,

being that teacher retention after the five-year period is a nation-wide problem and is not solely concentrated in one area.

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of a study involves credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following four terms are defined and described as to how they will be sustained throughout the study.

Credibility within a qualitative study can be defined as a truth that the results from the study are plausible and represent sincere information as given first-hand by the participants (Anney, 2014). The credibility of this study is established because it uses triangulation and member checking through the interviews collected, data analysis, and the report of findings.

Transferability is “the degree to which the results of the qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents” (Anney, 2014, p. 277). Because the participants within this study were purposefully selected, this contributes to the transferability of the study.

Dependability is “the stability of findings over time” (Bitsch, 2005, p. 86). The dependability of this study was kept through both meticulous interviewing skills and transcriptions. It was also shown by choosing participants that matched the demographic average for Texas teachers.

Confirmability is the idea that the results of the study could be verified and validated by other researchers because it is information that is taken directly from the data presented from the participants (Anney, 2014). In keeping the raw data, materials, interview questions, and transcriptions throughout the study, this established

confirmability. In addition, the researcher kept a reflexive journal throughout the research process to add to the confirmability within the study.

### **Summary**

This study was completed in order to determine why purposefully selected teachers chose to remain teaching for longer than the five-year average within Title I schools in attempts to examine a perspective of the teacher retention crisis. The area of study was within a large urban city within the state of Texas, and the three teachers selected for the study were audio-interviewed via the Zoom platform. Their responses were transcribed, and the data was dissected and ultimately analyzed. A case study method was employed, and the data was presented as a story about their experiences of teaching for greater than five-years within a Title I school.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

This study examined why three certain Title I educators have taught longer than the five-year average. The purpose of this study was to gain information about what sets them apart from the others who leave within five years, in an attempt to gain an understanding of common attributes or strategies for retaining more teachers. Because there was a void in the overall research of why teachers stay in the profession, this study was necessary for taking a look into the phenomenon.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following research question: What is the teachers' perception as to what factors, both internal and external; motivate educators to continue teaching longer than the typical five-year span within a Title I school?

A qualitative approach was used throughout the study. To examine the experience between the three participants, thorough interviewing was employed. Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, it allowed for coding to take place and themes to emerge. The results of the study offer a glimpse into why three Title I educators have found continued success past the five-year average and their perspectives on why others have left the field. The themes and subthemes gathered through this study are shown below in Table 5.

Table 5

*Themes and Subthemes*

| Themes                               | Subthemes   | Internal or External Motivator? |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Theme 1: Kids                        | Look up to teachers as consistent role models                           | External                        |
|                                      | Come back to remind teachers they are important                         | External                        |
|                                      | Teach the teachers (patience, understanding, unconditional love, etc.)  | External                        |
| Theme 2: Internal Motivation         | Making a difference   | Internal                        |
|                                      | Called to career at young age   | Internal                        |
|                                      | Focused on the end goal of having a positive impact on students         | Internal                        |
|                                      | Consistency   | Internal                        |
|                                      | Never considered another career   | Internal                        |
| Theme 3: Administration sets culture | Open Communication  | External                        |
|                                      | Trustworthy   | External                        |
|                                      | Knows important information about staff's personal lives                | External                        |
|                                      | Good climate is maintained (climate/sunshine committee, teamwork, etc.) | External                        |

|                                  |  |                  |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Theme 4:<br>Needs<br>improvement | More appreciation needs to be shown                                      | External problem |
|                                  | Too many Title I requirements  | External problem |
|                                  | Principals need to be held accountable for low retention rates           | External problem |
|                                  | Work conditions need to be improved                                      | External problem |
|                                  | Higher level administration needs to take more notice of retention issue | External problem |

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. Four significant themes and additional subthemes emerged after considerable analysis of the recorded data. Each transcribed interview set was read at least a dozen times, and the final master document with all interview responses was read through more than twenty times to ensure the researcher was exceptionally familiar with the content presented. Reoccurring terms and sentiments were analyzed, tabled, and a word cloud was created as a graphic representation. A word web was also initially created to aid in the visual process of outlining all major themes and its subthemes. In presenting the findings, thick description, and actual quotes from all three participants were employed to showcase the theme or subtheme.



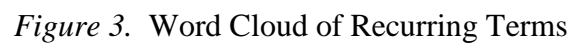
## Data Collection

The table below represents the words that were reused many times throughout all interviews by all three interview participants. This information was collected through the coding of information found within the interview transcriptions. The top ten words or phrases were then entered into a Word Cloud application, and a beautiful apple cloud was created. These words were: kids, administrators, support, principal, stress, climate, stipend, mental health, appreciation, and internal. The highest count was 54 repeated times, and the lowest word occurred eight times throughout the interviews. The larger words occurred more frequently, while the smaller words occurred less frequently, although still important within this study. The information is shown numerically below in Table 6.

Table 6

*Interview Word Cloud Table*

| <b>Word</b>    | <b>Number of Times Used</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Kids           | 54                          |
| Administrators | 35                          |
| Support        | 29                          |
| Principal      | 26                          |
| Stress         | 21                          |
| Climate        | 17                          |
| Stipend        | 15                          |
| Mental Health  | 10                          |
| Appreciation   | 9                           |
| Internal       | 8                           |



## **Summary of Participants**

The information gained from the study was through three participants. These three participants were teachers who have taught longer than the five-year average, and in particular, within a Title I school. These participants were purposefully selected through a social network of peers. All three were employed within Title I schools in a large district in Texas. The ages ranged from the early 40s to the mid-50s. One was a bilingual teacher, while the other two were general education teachers.

## **Participant Profiles**

### **Leon**

Leon was a male in his late 40s, who has been a teacher for 14 years. He was Hispanic and unmarried. Leon was an Education major and graduated from a college in the Southwestern region of the United States. All 14 years of teaching had been within different Title I schools around the country. His last seven years of teaching had been within different Title I schools in Texas. He had most recently taught bilingual elementary students in grades four and five and has no intention of leaving the profession until retirement. Leon had mentored many student teachers in the past, and had a deep internal drive for teaching youth within Title I schools. This internal drive first started from volunteering. Leon mentioned that there were certain internal qualities that current or potential Title I teachers should exhibit. These are included in his following statement made during interview two:

The first quality is: they have to have a love for teaching. I think they have to be understanding of circumstances. And the third quality would be someone who is

willing to be a part of a team. Because at a Title I school it has to be a team effort...it can't just be individual teachers.

### **Kacey**

Kacey was a female in her early 40s. She had previously been a paraprofessional and was currently a first-grade teacher. She had 13 total years of experience in education between being a paraprofessional and teacher. She had one child of her own and was not married. Kacey attended a local Texas college and majored in Education. She had since gone on to obtain a Master's degree, as well.

She was extremely passionate about teaching Title I students and remains the minority as a White female at her school with a majority Hispanic/African American population. One day, she hoped to move into a role in educational administration, as evidenced through her statement:

I recently received my masters in administration. So, I would say it's a different career because right now I'm a teacher, and so I'm wanting to move into the administrative aspect of education. The reason why is because you have this little bubble within your classroom of you know anywhere between 18 and 25, sometimes 30 students that you can reach, and depending on if you're--I'm self-contained so that's all I have...you know...or if I do have classes that switch then what you have maybe up to 60 kids? That's all I can reach. But as an administrator you have the capability to reach the whole campus. So that's where my heart is...you know I don't want to just reach those kids that are within that bubble. I want to reach a larger group of kids within a school setting, and possibly further on if I decide to go into becoming a superintendent or area

superintendent then I can reach more. And it's all about reaching more...you know I look at it as a positive.

### **Azalea**

Azalea was an African American in her 50s with 30 years of teaching experience. She came from a family of educators and had one son. Her first ten years of teaching were within a Catholic school, and her last twenty years have been within a Title I school. She found that Title I teaching was more fulfilling and had no intention of retiring anytime soon. Azalea had taught grades one through four and was currently a Grade 4 teacher, as well as the team leader. She had received many awards and recognitions, including 'Teacher of the Year' five times. Her educational background included a traditional bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Not only was she passionate about her students, but also helping other teachers. She was a member of her school's climate committee, and stated the importance through this statement she made during her second interview:

At our campus we have a climate committee and this climate committee is designed to help motivate teachers. We have off-campus events and when we feel a teacher needs a pat on the back we give them like little notes or a little surprise or things like that. We do birthday celebrations to motivate teachers to try and stay in the profession. We are making our school a place where adults feel supported and cared for.

**Theme One: Kids**

All three of the participants within the study noted several times that the main reason why they stayed in education was because of the kids. It is essential to know that the words “kids” and “students” are synonymous within this study. Based on the manual coding of information taken from both rounds of interviews with all interviewees, and whether mentioning it directly or indirectly, their answers most frequently centered around the kids. Knowing that they are ultimately making a difference and having a positive impact on the precious lives of their students was a key component to remaining in the profession longer than the half-decade average.

Leon said:

My motivation up until this point has always been knowing that I’m helping the kids. It was a big motivation moving into Texas because I was working in Arizona and the money difference is extreme, so that helped...but ultimately it was just the kids and knowing that I’m making a difference.

Kacey stated:

You know each year...I’ll be honest...each year I say this is it. This is the last year I’m going to teach here...and you know...I know these kids need me. That’s why I keep going back. There’s this connection that I have with these kids and I’m the minority on campus being a white female, I am the minority being at a highly African American and Hispanic school, majority Hispanic. It’s different for me. Each year, like I said, it’s tough. It’s really hard. It drains you emotionally at times. And then you have those breakthroughs and it like erases all the hardship. So, there’s something about summer break. I don’t do anything over the summer.

I literally just take time for myself and I get like this itch coming the beginning of July where it's like "I'm ready...I'm ready to get back and see those kids" and I think that when that feeling is gone I know that it's time to step away.

Azalea responded:

The students need us more and we may be the only hope that they have for life. They may not have parents who went to college, or anybody to encourage them to try and get an education to better themselves. I am there for the students because I know they need me the most!

The findings correspondingly showed that not only do the teachers realize the impact they have on their students, but also the influence that the students have them as individuals. The kids taught the teachers attributes such as patience, understanding, and unconditional love. Even after the students left, some returned years later to again remind them of the impact that they had on their lives.

Leon remarked:

A highlight of my career is...well I don't know...I can't think of just one...I can't think of one certain thing. I guess it's just when I see kids that I taught before. When they come back and I guess that would be one thing. Just seeing that I did make a difference.

Kacey voiced:

When I tell fellow educators or even just people where I teach...the first thing they say is OH MY GOSH!...and I'm like NO, you don't understand. I drive 26 miles just to get to work, and 26 miles to come home. I drive through five different districts to get to my school and I want to be there. It's an experience like no

other. Like I said earlier...these children have taught me patience that I never had before. I went into education and I have Attention Deficit Disorder, and so, with that comes a little bit of OCD and they have taught me that it is in my head. Like some of those things that I want, they're not necessarily needed, so when I say unique experience. It's that I have so much growth personally because of the children that I work with, and so I would say, it's like who can go to their job and say "my 7 year old students have taught me to be a better person" like who can do that? I can say that. There are not many people who can say that. And so you know, it's when...when I say unique it's great. And there's the negative. You know I have children who come into my classroom and say, "Ms. Kacey\* we had to sleep in the tub last night because there was a shooting." And you learn to have a softer more gentle heart towards those kids and you have to have sometimes a motherly spirit about yourself towards those kids rather than just an educator. So, I think that people who are at non-Title I schools, they don't experience that. You know? They don't have those connections that we can have where we were at on my campus as a Title I school.

Azalea noted:

One of my biggest highlights would be when my students come back to visit and they thank me for all the things I have instilled in them. And tell me all their success stories. Finding out what they have accomplished because I have students who are doctors and lawyers now. Just coming back and sharing all those things and telling me that it was because of me encouraging them that they got their education and how important education was. So, that's my highlight I enjoy that.



The overall impact of reaching children and the teachers' learning from their students had been pivotal to all three participants within the study. Through knowing that they were making a difference and feeling an internal connection with the students, as well as feeling that they had a bigger impact on the overall being of their kids; this had been what motivated them to remain in the field longer than the five-year average. All three referenced back to the fact that the highlight of their careers had been their students coming back to visit them. Kacey also voiced:

The highlight of my career? I would say...I would say its student growth. It's student growth. And it's not necessarily education. It could be emotionally. You know, when you start helping these kids emotionally...their education...it's all entwined...so when you start reaching them emotionally and start helping them with their physical and emotional needs it's like that education aspect of it falls into place and so it's...seeing that is pretty awesome.

It is important to note that while referencing their students or answering a question surrounding the impact on their students, each of the participants sounded happier--lighter in their voices, and one could tell that they were smiling, as opposed to when they were speaking about what needed improvement within the field or what was negatively impacting retention. There was an overall sense of pride and honor in them choosing to be a teacher and remain in the field simply because of the impact that they had on their students and vice-versa.

## **Theme Two: Internal Motivation**

Through coding the information gained within the interview transcripts, the next theme apparent was internal motivation. Internal motivation can be best explained as "it

describes the engagement in or attraction to an activity for the sake of enacting the activity, such that there is no known external incentive for said activity” (Lennertz, 2011). In this study, all three of the participants were internally motivated to teach.

Leon responded:

I really love what I do. I feel like this is my *purpose*. I feel like I make a difference. I feel like I’m doing what I was meant to do. I never go to work, you know like, dreading going to work. I never think about doing something else...this is all...I’m really happy with what I do.

Kacey noted:

I think I’ve always known that I wanted to teach...and for so long I didn’t want to teach. If that makes sense...like I have always been drawn to children. I have always been able to work really well with especially younger kids and just relate to them...and uhm...I think looking back when I was younger and looking at the money aspect of it I kind of ran from education because you know it’s such a struggle that teachers don’t get paid enough and I just could not fight my calling anymore and so when I was in my mid-30s I went back to school and went straight education as my major and uhm it was something that was just always in me...and when I talked back with my mom...who is also an educator...uhm...she’s like 2 it was always in you as an infant. I remember you always being very nurturing and you would always play school and you were always, you know. I can just remember you and your friends sitting in your room and you were little like 5 or 6 years old and you were playing teacher...and you know you were always wanting to work with kids in the nursery at church and so it was

something that was just there...it was already in me...and so it was just like you know...who cares if I'm not making a million bucks or I'm making \$100,000 per year...you know, I'm happier doing something that I enjoy.

Azalea declared:

Well, every year I say I'm going to retire, but I haven't yet! Because I love teaching! I love teaching and it's all I always wanted to do. I can't think of any other profession that I would enjoy doing. I can't think of anything else!

Although the word "internal" only showed up eight times and was the tenth most common keyword, the essence of the word and examples are given throughout each interview contributed to the importance of having the internal motivation to remain in teaching. All three participants acknowledged the fact that they felt they were "called" to the profession, have not considered another career, and stay focused on the end goal, which is ultimately making a difference in the lives of children. These were all consistent individuals who had realized that consistency was key to remaining in the profession because, as the years go by, they had found that things have gotten better and more manageable with experience.

Leon continued:

Well personally, I was jumping from major to major and then I volunteered at a Head Start program, and then just being around kids. I've always been really good around kids and very patient with my nieces and nephews and friends of the family type thing. When I volunteered and saw how eager kids were to learn, and how I was able to make a positive impact even in a volunteer setting, I knew this

was something that I could really be successful at and was meant to do. It was a just a good fit.

Additionally, Leon avowed:

I think internal factors promote retention. I think if things are going good within...it's very hard for the external factors to affect it...but it's just whenever things aren't going well internally then that's when any external factors can ultimately cause people to leave.

Another way this internal motivation was expressed was in Azalea's response about requiring a stipend.

Azalea replied:

I believe a stipend is a great way to encourage teachers to stay in schools, but a good teacher would stay regardless of a stipend because they are there for the best interest of their students.

Instead of believing a stipend was necessary, she felt that a teacher should stay regardless of the money--an internal drive.

### **Theme Three: Administration Sets Culture**

The teachers involved with this study overwhelmingly mentioned the words 'administrator, admin, or principal' a combined 61 times throughout the study and within the data analysis process. Participants one through three were clear about the impact school leaders have on retention. Although the students and internal motivation definitely drove their desire to stay within the career, an external force which contributed substantially is ultimately the school administration.

Leon emphasized:

This is the first campus that has really been able to retain the majority of the teachers. The big thing is that teachers are heard. All the way up through the administration at school. They're always willing to hear the teachers. We're always having our voices heard. If we recommend something or if we have something we have to say, we know that it gets heard by administration. It might not always be approved, but we at least know that they are hearing it. The [principals] we have are very visible. They're not always in meetings or off-campus. We have had principals that the kids didn't even know who they were because they were never there or never around. I think the qualities our principals have is that they are very visible, they're very involved, and they know the kids. They know the teachers. They know what's going on on campus, not just by numbers, but they actually know. All of the administrators. They're very involved in the school, and everybody knows that. The kids know that, the teachers, and even the parents know that administration is involved.

Kacey lamented:

The principals have a very strong responsibility in the climate of their staff and when there's a good climate, people stay. When there's a negative feel about the school then teachers run. Teachers will stay at a hard school when the climate is great. When they have a great team to work with, great administration to work with, and even other staff members to work with, they'll stay because they can make a day that was so hard, they can make it enjoyable--but when you have a tough classroom on top of a poor climate, you're going to run because it just takes too much of you mentally and people don't want to be a part of that. I look at our

campus now and we've got some change coming and it makes it exciting. I've got difficulties in my class and other teachers got difficulties in their class and we can come together and we have a really good team and we might have a moment and we can laugh with each other, but what I think is the greatest thing about my campus is, when things aren't going right, I can go to my principal and shut that door and I can tell him exactly what is wrong, even if I am a part of something that might be a little negative, I can be honest. He's going to be completely honest with me, but at the end of the day he works really hard to fix it. And that's not only personally, but also educationally.

Another significant statement made by Kacey was as follows:

Administrators. Most definitely the administrators. I think they're the first person to promote it and then it trickles down to the teachers. I will say...my administrator...as much as I love him. He's not big on that. Because he will tell you "I'm not going to make a teacher stay if they don't wanna stay." I think it's hard. I can see his point of view, but then again I don't necessarily agree with it. Because I've seen good teachers leave, when we should have said what can we do for you to make you stay or what can we do to help you stay here because you're so good. I can understand saying that to a teacher who doesn't necessarily work out for the school because they don't meet our...I don't want to say "standards," but their views don't coincide with the vision. So, I can understand that. But our administrator is really like that with all teachers. I mean even with me. He's told me before, "I never want to lose you," but he's also told me in the same sentence, "I'm not going to hold you back." So you know, it starts there.

Azalea asserted:

If [administrators] set high expectations and carry through with their teaching in being fair and leading the school, then they shouldn't have problems with retention. If you're not doing that and you're the leader, the leader sets the tone of the school. So if you have a high turnover of teachers, you know that something must be going on. Sometimes I think that principals just try to please all teachers in the wrong way. If they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing and teachers are leaving, then there should be consequences. When a principal leads in a positive manner, then you can see change and there is a continuum of teachers who stay. You're the leader of the school--you set the tone of the school. If not, there should be consequences.

In having administration that sets the tone of the school, this involves a few different components: open communication, favorable climate, trustworthiness, and they are aware of what is going on with their staff not only at a professional level, but also important pieces in their personal lives which their employees openly share with them because of the relationships they maintain.

Leon conceded:

[My principal] does have an open door policy, but at our weekly planning meetings we're able to make suggestions, we're able to voice our opinions and through the people who are running the weekly meetings, we know that the principal will hear either through them or you know no one is really afraid to go and talk to administration. They are very open and understanding.

Kacey agreed:

Most definitely through a positive climate for the staff and students. When the students are happier there, it does affect the teachers and it makes them want to stay. I think that's the key to that retention is maintaining a great climate. The first thing is that you have to have open communication with your teachers where they are able to tell you how they feel through surveys or questionnaires. You have to be present. You have to be going into the classrooms and not just doing observations. You have to tell your teachers how much you appreciate them. Leaving little sticky notes that say what you saw was really great, just in that moment. There are so many things that make a good administrator, but it all comes with time.

Azalea expressed:

The principals. They set the standard for the school. They are the ones in charge and they're the head. If they're not doing anything then it affects everybody--the students and teachers.

#### **Theme Four: Needs Improvement**

Although this was generally a positive study that attempted to gain information about why particular educators have remained in the profession longer than the five-year average, there were many instances where the teachers shared their perspectives on areas that needed improvement if the retention problem is going to get better in the future. To get a glimpse of some of the improvements needed, participants one through three stated the following:

Leon affirmed:



I guess all the little jumping through hoops where every year they target the Title I schools and try to “fix em” and so they have all these new things that they want to do and a lot of times it’s not the best for the...for what we’re doing...but you have to jump through the hoops so that they can cross off their checklist to say that they’re doing it...and I guess that’s the biggest thing because every year it’s something new, and every year they’re focusing on what we can do as a Title I school. I guess that’s what’s frustrating because a lot of times it’s a waste of time doing things twice and three times when you really only need to do it once.

Kacey implored:

Lack of resources. The lack of funds and the lack of resources. I have teacher friends who are at schools and every kid has an I-pad. I’m a part of teacher groups where every kid has an I-pad and they show pictures of their classrooms and I’m like oh wow, you know I’m like we have mold! You know we have Chromebooks for half the class. And I think that is what’s so tough is that they are not getting an equal playing field as everyone else who are at non-Title I schools. And to me when I look at it, it’s like...you know...education should be an equal playing field. No matter what race you are, and no matter how much money you have at home. We should all be able to get an education the same way. So that’s pretty frustrating.

Azalea insisted:

Improve the work environment. A mentoring program. Incentives. Provide leadership opportunities...and did I say improve the work environment?

Problems within the work environment, lack of resources, and having to jump through unnecessary hoops were a few mentioned problems that need improvement, but an even bigger issue ultimately impacts a teacher's mental health. There were several references to the stress of the job and how it can influence the mental state of the educator. When all three educators were directly asked: "On a scale from 1 to 10, with ten being the highest stress, how stressful is teaching within a Title I school in comparison to other common careers in business, medical, hospitality fields, etc.?" Their responses were as follows:

Leon emphasized:

I would give it a 6 or 7. It is [more stressful] because teachers are really looked at for their students' performances and there's a lot riding on how your kids do. It's not like we're worried about losing our jobs or anything like in some of the other sectors, but I think there is a lot of stress placed on teachers for performance and their kids performing and how their school performs, so there's that. For a lot of other jobs, your stress leaves when you clock out and they don't take things home--whereas teachers are always thinking about it which would cause more stress than the other fields.

Kacey exclaimed:

I would say it's a 10. You know the stress level; you can't even compare the two. There are days where we might not get a lunch because we are dealing with so many things and we might have things that are due, we might have students that need us. There are days where you are in the corporate world and they go and take lunches and they get to have a beer or marg. We can't go and distress that

way and come back to work. We get basically a 20-minute lunch and there is no leaving campus at all. And the things that are due are like--you have so many people breathing down your back in a Title I school compared to those in the corporate world. In the corporate world you know who your assistant manager, your manager, and you know who that big boss is. At our campus, we have a reading specialist, literacy specialist, math coach, a counselor, behavior specialist, assistant principal, principal, then we have the area superintendents, and superintendent. So we have a lot of people who are telling us what to do, when to do, and how to do it, and sometimes they're not all telling you the same thing. So it's so much different than compared to saying oh I have 3 people over me, no I have 10--so it's hard.

Azalea related:

I would say 9 because teachers' jobs are never done. You're always bringing things home to work on--lesson plans, meetings, talking to parents, there's just a whole lot of stress and your job never ends. A majority of my friends and family members are educators, and in our conversations we're all talking about the same things--the stress over bringing so much work home, not having enough time in school to get things done, and the principals don't realize that they're giving us so much all at one time without thinking about the mental health of the teachers.

### **Addressing the Teacher Retention Issue**

In asking pertinent questions surrounding the retention issue, there were significant statements made by all three participants regarding both administration and the retention problem in general. These also served as first-hand suggestions being made

by actual teachers within Title I schools, rather than the typically removed professionals who analyze the field of education and attempt to remedy its problems.

When specifically asked the question: How can administrators such as principals, assistant principals, area superintendents, etc. encourage retention efforts? The educators responded as follows:

Leon explained:

Some sort of acknowledgement system. I think that's what a lot of teachers want to get. They just want to be acknowledged and recognized for doing a good job. Not just for nothing, but those that are doing a good job and making the superintendents notice, but making sure they're actually aware of the teachers who are doing a great job.

Kacey remarked:

I think it's that they need to have their presence known and not in a negative way. We have a new area superintendent and I feel like the first time we met her it was very exciting and she was like a cheerleader, and now she's came in very negatively. I think that a presence coming into the class and just telling a teacher "wow that is awesome what you are doing," "I just noticed that you just did this"...taking two seconds out, yes you might be interrupting something, or saying "I noticed this or I'm really proud of you, you did a great job" instead of always coming in and saying secretly to the principal "this is what i noticed in this class, this is what needs to be fixed, and it needs to be fixed immediately." That is something that we really need to see a lot more of because when they do say that negative thing, you don't take it to heart and you don't take it personally and

you're like man she's seeing this this this and its great, but they notice I can improve in this area and they're more ready and willing to do it.

Azalea affirmed:

Maybe giving the teachers supplies that they need in advance. At my school they wait until the last minute to order books and supplies and materials and a lot of times we have to wait until December to get them. They should order them in advance so we have them when we need them and don't have to go in our own pockets to provide our students with the supplies. There are a lot of businesses that would donate them, as well. A majority of teachers spend their own money on school supplies when there are people out there who will donate them. I think that would be great if we just have books there that we need--paper, pencils, everything. You can show teachers appreciation for the work that they do by showing gratitude and appreciation. That helps build staff culture in retaining your best staff. For example, even just giving personal thank you notes, providing maybe a donut, or something simple showing that they appreciate teachers. Another thing I would consider is stop penalizing teachers who shouldn't be penalized. Often teachers who are doing what they are supposed to do suffer because people are always going to the teachers who need to be chastised.

In closing, when openly asking the interviewees: "How can we best address and help the retention problem in America?" The three had varied opinions on what needs to happen to remedy the problem. Two of the three started by mentioning money, while all

three go on to eventually address the work environment and support. Their sentiments are as follows:

Leon answered:

Money always helps. So, retention bonuses. Providing a work environment where people are heard. Where what you say and do matters. I have been at schools where if you show up or don't it really doesn't matter, and then there's other times where you're out and people will notice when you're not there.

Kacey explained:

It has to come down to monetary and support. We have people who have never taught in a classroom running our education system. They have no idea what is happening in the classrooms--that is where we have to start. We need to weed out those people and put people who have a background within the classroom, running our education system. They have that real knowledge. Instead of saying, oh I think--This is what we need to do. They don't have a greater understanding--they take funding, and we have kids who are in special education who are in 5th grade and reading at a 1st grade reading level and they still have to take the STAAR exam, and they don't care. That's a stressful thing for teachers because guess what, we know at the end of the day they're going to fail the test. It's going to go against the teacher because the teacher can't teach the students what they need to know. We need to support the teachers and students in saying, "we're not going to test these students, we're going to have real guidelines, we're going to look at "No Child Left Behind" and say is this really working or is it harming the

students and staff?” We have to pay teachers their worth. We have teachers with master’s degrees who are making less than people in the corporate world who have no degree and they’re working more hours. We have teachers who work 15-20 hours on a weekend to prepare for the following week and they are not getting paid for it. When it comes down to it and you look at how much a teacher actually makes, they make almost minimum wage when you look at the hours they put in to it. So we need to look at how are we going to support teachers and how are we going to pay them. We have millions of dollars from the Texas Lottery which is supposed to go into the education system and people are still asking the state of Texas; “where is this lottery money,” because there’s no proof that its actually going back into the education system.

Azalea suggested:

By supporting teachers and making sure that they have a balance from work to home. Having more mental health services teaching teachers how to take care of themselves. Maybe having something monthly to help them control the stress level.

These suggestions made by the respondents are not grandiose efforts, but basic wants for a successful teaching career. Salary increases might be out of the question, but creating a positive working environment and supporting teachers in their journey as an educator should be an easy fix for administrators who are competent in their practices.

## Summary and Discussion of Themes

In conclusion, there were four main themes found surrounding what causes three Title I educators to remain in the profession longer than the five-year average. These major themes and subthemes gathered from the interviewing and analysis process included:

- Teachers remain in the field because of their motivation of their students. The kids and knowing the impact they have on their lives make it worthwhile in the long run.
- These educators had an internal motivation that kept them in the field. This drive had started at a young age for most of them. This internal motivation continues to influence them each day in various ways.
- The administration on their campus positively impacted their choice to remain in teaching each year.
- Many improvements need to be addressed within the field of education in order to motivate more teachers to remain in the field long term. This includes, but is not limited to: work environment, salary, and showing gratitude.

Though the three participants had very different backgrounds and personalities, their motives for remaining in teaching longer than the national average were clear. The four themes shown are all paramount to success in remaining in the field and promoting continued retention of new teachers. If one or more of the themes go unaddressed, this can lead to teachers wanting to leave schools/districts or consider a new career move. Administrators do play a fundamental role in retention, but teachers must also consider their peers and students to help them to stay motivated to remain in the field long-term.



## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

#### **Overview of Study**

The objective of the study was to determine why certain Title I teachers remain in teaching for longer than the five-year average. This allowed for a case study to be conducted through extensive interviewing and analysis. The findings suggest that there are three leading premises for why Leon, Kacey, and Azalea remained in teaching for longer than the average: the kids, internal motivation, and administration. Additionally, the interviewees offered perceptions which showed there is a pronounced opportunity for improvements to be made within the field in order to encourage more teachers to remain in the profession.

Contrary to the previous research that had been conducted on the opposite end of the issue, as to why educators leave within five years, this study offered findings for why they remain in the career. There are many of the same motivators found across the studies such as administration, work environment, and salary, which ultimately impacted these three teacher's decisions to remain in teaching, although additional components were discovered.

#### **Implications**

My study offered a unique perspective from three Title I teachers who have lasted longer than the national teaching average in their career. Their stories proposed information for teachers, administrators, officials, and outsiders alike to gain valuable insight into the subject. It is from the interviewees' thick description of their tenure within these urban Texas schools that I submit the following implications.

In initially examining the realm of retention, many studies focused on administration, mentorship, work environment, and undergraduate preparedness. My study adds to these themes, yet a deeper and broader focus is needed on administration, such as principals, area superintendents, and other chief leaders within a school district. Teachers may often be the focus on the study, but their efforts can only go so far when left unaided and alone in the profession. Simple support and appreciation shown to teachers from these leaders can make a world of difference in improving the retention rates. Scholars Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2014) assert this idea stating, "Personal growth and the ability to receive support from administrators regarding emotional, environmental, and instructional support had an impact on a teacher's decision to stay or leave" (p. 132). My research gives a basis for the phenomenon of Title I teachers in this position, but more exploration is encouraged.

A significant finding from the study showed the importance of internal motivation. There has been little mention of the impact this has on motivating teachers to stay in other reports. As all three participants shared, there have been levels to their internal drive each year. Choosing to have a career within education might have been instilled in them at a young age or in finding their passion through volunteering with kids, but the continual drive to stay employed year-after-year knowing that they are making a difference despite all the mental stress and challenging working conditions was such a pivotal factor. Even if these educators were lacking in receiving appreciation, praise, or simple gratitude from principals, parents, or other leaders, they found it in their students. Educators even learned things such as patience and perseverance from their kids. Rather than giving up and leaving, these three educators stay because they know that at the end

of the day, their kids depend on them. Being in this position in the past, I can relate and tell you this is a genuine motivator. If teaching is truly in your heart, despite the mental hardships, one will stay because of the kids. However, it is not fair to solely bank on a teacher staying because of internal motivation. As these teachers mentioned, mental stress is extremely real and something that many cannot handle, so they end up leaving. It is time to do something about this issue instead of just posting a sign in the teacher's lounge about a hotline number a teacher can call if they need assistance. There are daily struggles as a teacher in handling the emotions and various needs of each student. As the participants noted, teachers need to feel not only supported but also that they are not alone when or if they are struggling to manage all that is asked of them as an educator. Districts should be not only proactive in hiring qualified teachers, but also promoting mental health resources. Instead of requiring teachers to attend redundant "district-wide" trainings, there should be more of a push for some sort of mental health day training or time for collaborative discussions, so teachers do not feel like they are drowning or alone.

In speaking about the salary aspect that was mentioned many times, this is where policymakers come into play. A recent Fact Sheet published by the National Education Association (NEA) stated that the average teacher salary is just over \$57,000 per year, however similarly skilled workers with comparable educational backgrounds make almost 20% more than teachers (2018). Notably, the NEA lists that in the 2017-2018 years the average starting salary within the United States was only \$39,249 ("2017-2018 Average Starting Teacher Salaries by State," 2019). Other reports have stated the average teacher pay has only increased by less than \$2,000 over the last ten years--surely not keeping up with yearly inflation rates. Countless teachers have second jobs to make

up the difference in salary, especially those at the bottom of the pay scale, and are still struggling to pay their most basic bills. The teachers interviewed for this study mentioned having to buy their own supplies for their students each year. Why is this a commonly accepted, actually expected, practice within education? We expect so much from our teachers not just mentally and emotionally, but adding this financial burden only makes attrition worse. The emotional impact of the job is already significant enough; we should at least be making an effort to pay teachers a fair wage and providing students with basic supplies—pencils included. Other countries hold teachers in the highest regard and pay them a respectable amount, yet even though we are one of the wealthiest countries in the world and supposedly “value” education, we do not show this in the way that we both pay or treat our teachers. This needs to change and will only happen when lawmakers take note of the impact of so many qualified, effective teachers leaving the field.

### **Future Research**

Future research into the teacher retention issue might focus on administrators in particular. As other studies previously noted, the principal and how they treat the staff and behave around them have a powerful impact on a teacher’s intent to stay or leave the school (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Many of the conversations with the interviewees about teacher success, happiness, and ultimately retention ends up centering around administration, and whether or not they are doing a respectable job in effectively maintaining relationships with their staff. Once a relationship is established and maintained, it is easier to gauge a teacher’s perceptions about their contentment within the field and how to best assist them in becoming the best educator as possible, for as

long as possible. Administrators want us as teachers to show and prove to our students that they matter, so why wouldn't administrators do the same for their staff?

Demoralization of teachers has been a hot media topic in recent months, so perhaps more research is needed in this major area of concern.

Potential research surrounding administration could also examine the extent to which they are trained or asked by higher-level district officials to maintain relationships or oversee retention rates. I suspect there is currently a need for additional improvement in this area. Former or retired administrators could be used as a vast wealth of knowledge, especially when there is a new principal or assistant principal within the school. Just as teachers need mentorship, administrators could benefit from them too.

The current report focused exclusively on elementary teachers due to the familiarity of elementary schools from the researcher's background. Attrition is not only an issue at this level, and it should be studied at the secondary band, as well. In studying retention at multiple points, this will lead to a clearer picture of the motivators at various bands, not only the elementary level.

An additional avenue to explore in relation to this study would be Title I retention versus non-Title I school retention rates and how each is impacted based on the different settings and variables. It would be interesting to potentially compare the two in not only seeing statistically how they compare, but how the retention efforts differ in both situations. In gaining this information, it could better assist teachers and educational leaders as a whole when examining the issue.

Because the study conducted was solely qualitative and involved an extremely small sample size, perhaps in the future, a much larger sample size could be used. The

investigation could even employ a mixed-methods approach to allow for more data to be collected and analyzed. Since the research was focused solely on Title I teachers, another study could instead look at non-Title I teachers because retention within those schools is an issue there, as well. As a suggestion, whether examining participants from a Title I or non-Title I school, when initially screening these potential participants, a Google form could be employed to survey a large number of respondents. This example can be found in Appendix E. It was not used in the current study due to the small sample size and selecting from a social network of peers. No matter the selected method, the retention subject is meaningful to continue to investigate to better understand the choices that teachers make to either leave or remain in the field for a particular amount of time.

### **Recommendations**

In looking at the qualitative data presented, it shows the significance of retaining teachers. However, this study was conducted with a minimal sample size. When considering the high-needs of student populations within Title I schools, it is critical to make district-level administration aware of the severity of the turnover situation. Teacher burnout is a very real occurrence, and we continue to see this each year in our schools. The media continues to popularize teachers striking and exiting the field. The public is aware of issues within the profession, yet little change has been made to even address the problem.

Because the information from the interviews presented a major internal motivator for these teachers who have lasted in the profession more than ten years, it is valuable to note that individuals who plan on having a career within teaching should have the desire to be there because they genuinely want to work with students. When you have an

internal motivation, it pushes on to preserve through difficulty because you realize you are doing something for a greater good--not just merely working for a paycheck.

Teaching is not an easy profession, and I feel more people need to realize how many tasks are required. With many more students who are labeled as gifted, have learning disabilities, Special Education labels, or simply students who come with a multitude of issues: teaching is not a profession that should be taken lightly. More research should be conducted on internal motivation and the overall impact it transmits on teachers.

There needs to be more accountability at the college level, as well, to ensure that students are learning necessary and relevant material that will enable them to succeed once they have a classroom of their own. Researchers Kaufman and Al-Bataineh (2011) confirm that most teachers do not feel adequately prepared to enter the field upon graduation. The interviewed respondents from this study also noted this problem. Therefore, if that means change needs to take place through extending the student teaching experience or having students placed at campuses that are not rated 'A' or 'Exemplary,' then that is what needs to occur. The first year of teaching is a learning experience in itself, but this should not mean that we are inadequately preparing novice teachers and letting them either "sink or swim" because that is what has happened in the past. The sink or swim strategy is not appropriate and ultimately is setting teachers up for failure and unquestionably not keeping a retention-positive strategy in mind when repeating the use of this strategy year after year with new instructors.

Additionally, I would recommend that in the future, district-level decision-makers are required to take note of the turnover rate within its borders. In beginning to take notice of this number, from there they can start to realize the severity of the situation. If

they were aware of the \$8,000 cost of losing, a teacher every year and having to hire and retrain new employees, I feel they would take special note and interest in this issue (Darling-Hammond, 2003). All three participants who were interviewed for the study agree to this sentiment. The word 'cost' refers to both the monetary cost of rehiring and retraining new staff, as well as the knowledge cost that occurs when districts lose teachers one or more years into their career. I would offer they should start by investigating the last five or ten years--depending on the data they have collected. Certain districts will want to look further back to see where the high turnover rates began. Once district administration has this data, from there, they can start to look at why particular schools have higher rates of the turnover. From there, they can move into having conversations with principals in addressing their concerns with turnover on their singular campus. I would deem that there are individual schools in unique situations that hold definite challenges that district-level administrators may not be aware of and will need to address. Once principals are conscious that the district has taken thorough interest in retention efforts, hopefully, it will trickle down to the promotion of a more positive school culture.

Through the literature previously published surrounding retention, as well as the information gained from this study, administrators play such a major role in influencing teachers. It is imperative that they are held accountable for their overall retention rates each year. This starts with being proactive in hiring quality staff members that have more drive than merely wanting to become a teacher for the starting pay of \$50,000 or more within the state of Texas or because it is at the last minute of the summer and an administrator wants to "fill a position." The students deserve more teachers who are



sincerely invested in meeting the challenges of the vocation. While principals should not be penalized for teachers who are, for example, moving out of state or something entirely out of their control--they should at least be required to have a conversation with the teacher to see if there is something they can do to help keep them at their job.

As the interviewees stated, it is important for administration to have open communication and show at least a small amount of basic gratitude. I contemplate that is where most administration has been missing the mark. It is easy to make excuses and continuously say "I'm too busy with so many obligations," most notably as the leader of a Title I school, however, in showing plain human decency and appreciation for your staff, leaders should make time to check in with staff and show at least an ounce of appreciation. If the administration truly does not have the time to do this personally, then as an administrator, they are 'leaders' and should know how to delegate this task to possibly a climate or social (Sunshine) committee on campus. The administration should still be actively checking in with this committee and making their presence known, rather than just completely removing themselves from the grand effort. Once teachers see that their leaders care about keeping them instead of simply replacing them, this could be the beginning of preserving them longer than the typical five years. Opening lines of communication between administrators, at both the district and campus level, and teachers, is key to solving this crisis. However, leaders must be willing to take this first step!

Here is a synopsis of the recommendations in looking to improve the teacher retention rates:

- Be proactive in hiring quality teachers who show more than a monetary interest in the career
- Focus on more accountability at the college level in better preparing future educators
- Have district-level officials take note of retention rates and initiate conversations about improving averages
- Encourage campus-level administrators to maintain and encourage open-communication with staff members and show basic amounts of gratitude
- Create and promote a Climate (Sunshine) Committee on campus to further show more support for teachers

Although there are many recommendations listed, this was not an exhaustive list. There could be other strategies that could better improve the retention rates; however, it all depends on the variables surrounding each campus and its staff members.

### **Conclusions**

Students, internal motivation, and administration are what it came down to in the case of these three teachers who remained motivated to have a long tenure within the field of education. While this was a qualitative study which took place on a small scale, it can and should be replicated on a larger scale to account for more teacher perspectives and insight into the future of retaining teachers more effectively. Additional focused efforts in handling the countless issues within the profession should take place at all levels. Being a former Title I teacher gave some basis for the study, but results show there is still much more to not only be discovered but also addressed to improve the average percentage of teachers who stay.

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**Appendix A**  
**IRB Approval**

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DIVISION OF RESEARCH  
Institutional Review Boards

## APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

September 16, 2019

Ashley Canchari  
[aacanchari@uh.edu](mailto:aacanchari@uh.edu)

Dear Ashley Canchari:

On September 16, 2019, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Type of Review:            | Initial Study   |
| Title of Study:            | Why They Stay: A Look into Why Three Title I Educators Taught Longer than the Five-Year Average   |
| Investigator:              | Ashley Canchari   |
| IRB ID:                    | STUDY00001809   |
| Funding/ Proposed Funding: | Name: Unfunded  |
| Award ID:                  |   |
| Award Title:               |   |
| IND, IDE, or HDE:          | None  |
| Documents Reviewed:        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IRB Modifications Letter.pdf, Category: Other;</li> <li>• CANCHARI_HRP-502a Sept 10.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• CANCHARI_HRP-503 Sept 11.pdf, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> <li>• CANCHARI_Interview Questions Set 1.pdf, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.);</li> <li>• Canchari_Recruitment Flyer Sept 10.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> </ul> |
| Review Category:           | Exempt  |
| Committee Name:            | Noncommittee review   |
| IRB Coordinator:           | <u>Maria Martinez</u>   |

The IRB approved the study on September 16, 2019 ; recruitment and procedures detailed within the approved protocol may now be initiated.

As this study was approved under an exempt or expedited process, recently revised regulatory requirements do not require the submission of annual continuing review documentation. However, it is critical that the following submissions are made to the IRB to ensure continued compliance:

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DIVISION OF RESEARCH

Institutional Review Boards

- Modifications to the protocol prior to initiating any changes (for example, the addition of study personnel, updated recruitment materials, change in study design, requests for additional subjects)
- Reportable New Information/Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others
- Study Closure

Unless a waiver has been granted by the IRB, use the stamped consent form approved by the IRB to document consent. The approved version may be downloaded from the documents tab.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,

Research Integrity and Oversight (RIO) Office  
University of Houston, Division of Research  
713 743 9204  
[cphs@central.uh.edu](mailto:cphs@central.uh.edu)  
<http://www.uh.edu/research/compliance/irb-cphs/>

## **Appendix B**

### **Participation Information**

(Recruitment Flyer: Attachment A)

**Participants Needed in a Research Study:**

*Why They Stay: A Look into Why Three Title I Educators Taught Longer than the Five-Year Average*

Hi! I am looking for current teachers within a Title I Elementary school who have taught more than five years (and have never been placed on an improvement plan) to participate in a qualitative research study about retention rates. I am currently a doctoral student at the University of Houston and am seeking qualified contributors to interview a minimum of two times, lasting around an hour each time. The initial interview will allow for introductory data to be collected and the second will be a clarification of findings. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

**Time Commitments:**

- Interview 1: An initial interview lasting for approximately 1 hour.
- Interview 2: The follow-up interview to review themes or allow for clarification, lasting approximately 45 minutes.

Please contact Ashley Canchari at (952) 452-2221 or [ashleycanchari@gmail.com](mailto:ashleycanchari@gmail.com) for more information.

“This research study has been reviewed by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board.”



**Recruitment Email**

Hey (name is kept confidential)!

I was wondering if you would be interested in being a participant in my study for my dissertation. I have attached the information (2 files).

Please read through all attached information to see if you would be a willing to participate. If so, interviews will start in the near future, based on your earliest convenience and availability.

I think you would be a great candidate!!

Either way, just let me know.

Thanks a million!

Regards,

**Ashley Canchari**  
Principal Investigator

Study Title: Why They Stay: A Look into Why Three Title I Educators Taught Longer than the Five-Year Average

## **Appendix C**

### **Informed Consent**

## Informed Consent Form

**Title of research study:** Why They Stay: A Look into Why Three Title I Educators Taught Longer than the Five-Year Average

**Investigator:** *Ashley Canchari*

### **Key Information:**

The following focused information is being presented to assist you in understanding the key elements of this study, as well as the basic reasons why you may or may not wish to consider taking part. This section is only a summary; more detailed information, including how to contact the research team for additional information or questions, follows within the remainder of this document under the “Detailed Information” heading.

### ***What should I know about a research study?***

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Taking part in the research is voluntary; whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide, and can ask questions at any time during the study.

At an increasing rate, teacher turnover is becoming a major problem for schools around the country. In fact, “across the United States, approximately half a million teachers leave their schools each year” (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 304). This is not only a problem

within urban schools, or Title I schools, but also in rural and suburban schools across the country. More specifically, most new teachers struggle to make it to five years within the education field (Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). This is a problem which continues to increase each year within the field of education.

Few studies have been published on why teachers in high-needs areas, such as at Title I schools, choose to stay in the profession for longer than the five-year average. Therefore, there is a need for a study to be conducted in examining various reasons why some educators have stayed within teaching for longer than the average term. This study will attempt to obtain additional perspectives and information from Title I school teachers whom have taught longer than the five year average. It may offer potential insight on how administrators can more effectively retain their teachers.

We invite you to take part in a research study about teacher retention because you meet the following criteria:

- ***Teacher with more than five years' experience***
- ***Must have taught at least five years within a Title I Elementary school***
- ***Currently employed at a Title I Elementary school***
- ***Not have been previously placed on a "Needs Improvement Plan"***
- ***Between the ages of 29-55 years old***

In general, your participation in the research involves:

- Participating in an initial interview about your past teaching experience within a Title I school.
- Participating in a shorter follow-up interview to elaborate or clarify any data or themes from the initial interview.

The primary risk to you in taking part is none; there are no known or foreseeable risks associated with this study.

### ***Detailed Information:***

The following is more detailed information about this study, in addition to the information listed above.

### ***Why is this research being done?***

*This study is being conducted in order to gain insight from educators who have taught longer than the five-year average. Because districts continue to lose quality teachers each year, this is continuing to be a problem with no end in sight on how we can fix low retention rates. By conducting interviews with teachers who have been in the field, teaching within Title I schools, for longer than the national average, it may give potential suggestions, strategies, etc. on how administrators can more effectively support and retain their teachers beyond five years.*

### ***How long will the research last?***

We expect that you will be in this research study for a maximum of two hours divided between two interviews: an initial interview lasting approximately one hour, and a follow up interview lasting approximately 45 minutes.

### ***How many people will be studied?***

*[Single-site study] We expect to enroll between 3-5 people in this research study.*

***What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?***

*If you say yes and agree to participate in this research study, you will be required to participate in two interviews. The two interviews will take place within a three-week span, based on your convenience, with only the primary investigator Ashley Canchari.*

| <b><i>Event</i></b>                  | <b><i>Location</i></b>                          | <b><i>Estimated Time</i></b>           |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b><i>1. Initial Interview</i></b>   | <b><i>Zoom (online conference platform)</i></b> | <b><i>Approximately 1 hour</i></b>     |
| <b><i>2. Follow-up Interview</i></b> | <b><i>Zoom (online conference platform)</i></b> | <b><i>Approximately 45 minutes</i></b> |

- With whom will the subject interact: Ashley Canchari***
- List study procedures and what the participant will be asked to complete:***  
*Participants will be asked to complete two interviews via Zoom an online conference platform.*
- If surveys or interviews are conducted, indicate if sensitive subject matter is involved, and give examples of such questions. Indicate whether subjects may skip questions that may make them uncomfortable. No sensitive subject matter is involved with this study. Subjects may skip any questions that make them feel uncomfortable.***

This research study includes the following component(s) where we plan to audio record you as the research subject:

- ☐ I agree to be **audio recorded** during the research study.
  - ☐ I agree that the **audio recording** can be used in publication/presentations.
  - ☐ I do not agree that the **audio recording** can be used in publication/presentations.
- ☐ I do not agree to be **audio recorded** during the research study.

***Participants electing not to be audio recorded during the two interviews will not be allowed to participate in the study.***

### ***What happens if I do not want to be in this research?***

You can choose not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you.

Choosing not to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

### ***What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?***

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

If you decide to leave the research, ***contact the investigator so that the investigator can remove your interview(s) from the collected data and the pseudonym attached to you.***

Subjects will be asked to explain the extent of their withdrawal by providing a written statement. No additional information will be asked of the subject.

### ***Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?***

***We do not expect any risks related to the research activities. If you choose to take part and undergo a negative event you feel is related to the study, please contact*** Ashley

Canchari at (952) 452-2221 or by email at [aacanchari@uh.edu](mailto:aacanchari@uh.edu).

***Will I receive anything for being in this study?***

***There is no payment or gift associated with participating in this study.***

***Will being in this study help me in any way?***

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research.

***What happens to the information collected for the research?***

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information private, including research study ***records***, to people who have a need to review this information. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number, which will appear on all written study materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the code number will be kept separate from these materials. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other representatives of this organization, as well as collaborating institutions and federal agencies that oversee our research.

***Your information that is collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.***

We may share and/or publish the results of this research. However, unless otherwise detailed in this document, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.



### ***Who can I talk to?***

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you should talk to the research team at [aacanchari@uh.edu](mailto:aacanchari@uh.edu) **or by telephone at (952) 452-2221.**

***You may also contact the faculty sponsor of this study, Dr. Cameron White at [cwhite@uh.edu](mailto:cwhite@uh.edu) or by telephone at (713) 743-8678.***

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also talk to them at (713) 743-9204 or [cphs@central.uh.edu](mailto:cphs@central.uh.edu) if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

**Signature Block for Capable Adult**

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

---

Signature of subject

---

Date

---

Printed name of subject

---

Signature of person obtaining consent

---

Date

---

Printed name of person obtaining consent

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Questions**

### Interview Questions Set 1

The initial interview consisted of 19 questions and included the following:

|   |
|---|
| 1. What initially made you want to become a teacher?  |
| 2. Did you begin in teaching or did you have a prior career?  |
| 3. How long have you been a teacher?  |
| 4. How long have you taught within a Title I (TI) school?   |
| 5. Do you enjoy teaching at a Title I school?   |
| 6. What would help motivate you to continue your career at a TI school?                               |
| 7. If you previously worked within a non-TI school, describe how it is different...                   |
| 8. Do you encourage your educator friends who are seeking employment to find work within a TI school? |
| 9. Do you feel teaching within a TI school is a unique experience? How so?                            |
| 10. Why do you continue teaching each year?   |
| 11. Have you considered another career? Why/why not?  |
| 12. What is the highlight of your career?   |
| 13. What is something that frustrates you about teaching within a TI school?                          |
| 14. How has teacher turnover impacted your campus?  |
| 15. How has teacher turnover impacted you personally?   |
| 16. Do you feel teacher retention is important? Why or why not?                                       |
| 17. Who should encourage/promote retention efforts?   |

18. What would increase retention?

19. Do internal or external factors ultimately promote retention? Explain.

## Interview Questions Set 2

ALL participants:

1. What internal qualities do you believe a good Title I teacher has? (or a potential Title I teacher) List the top 3-5. Explain.
2. Many have mentioned a stipend would help them continue within a Title I school. Why do you think this would encourage teachers to stay longer? How much do you believe the stipend should be?
3. How can administrators such as area superintendents, principals, assistant principals, etc. encourage retention efforts? Give examples.
4. Give examples of external efforts which may motivate teachers to stay in the profession longer than the 5-year average. What has worked for your campus(s) in the past?
5. Do you feel area sups, sups, other district-level administration are concerned with teacher retention? Do you feel they understand the true cost of failing to retain effective teachers each year--both monetarily and knowledge cost. Expand.
6. Do you feel the principal should take more responsibility when teachers fail to be retained at a certain percentage each year? How should this be handled?
7. On a scale from 1 to 10, with ten being the highest, how stressful is teaching within a Title I school in comparison to other common careers such as business, medical, etc?
8. Do you think teaching has a negative or positive affect on teacher's mental health? Do you feel districts consider this impact?
9. Do you think race plays in to retention within Title I schools considering often times they are majority minority students? Do you feel one race has more success than another? Why?
10. How can we best address and help the retention problem in America?
11. How can you personally take ownership in helping the retention efforts at your school?

12. Do you feel retention is headed in a more positive direction within the next 10 years?

Why or why not?

### **Individual Question Sets**

Participant 1:

1. You mentioned that you felt “teaching is your purpose.” How did you come to this realization? Give examples.
2. Additionally, you mentioned that retention was a major problem in a Title I school you taught at outside of Texas. Do you believe it is a nation-wide issue or more central to Texas?

Participant 2:

1. What would you say to the “minority” teacher who is working at a Title I school to encourage them to stay?
2. In the future, as a principal or other administrator, how will you encourage and support retention efforts within your school?

Participant 3:

1. As a grade-level leader, how have you encouraged your team to remain in teaching? Any specific strategies?
2. What has the secret been to staying within a Title I school for 20 years?

## **Appendix E**

### **Future Research Tools**



### **Demographic Survey**

A Google Form could be utilized to collect information about potential participants and to select the best candidates to be interviewed for the study. The brief survey below is a total of 11 questions. Some of the questions are multiple-choice; fill in the blank, or yes/no. The questions within the questionnaire include:

1. Email address
2. First and Last Name
3. Current Title
4. Number of years teaching (overall)
5. Number of years teaching at current school
6. Have you ever been placed on an Improvement Plan?
7. Highest level of education received
8. Male or female
9. Age
10. Race
11. Would you be willing to participate in a study based on teacher retention?

If selected, interviews would be split between up to two occasions and online video-based (using Zoom). Interviews will last no longer than 1-hour per segment. If needed, a follow up interview will be conducted. Your participation, including your name, will be kept completely confidential and anonymous.